

THE DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY OF CIVIL WAR PRISON CAMPS IN ILLINOIS AND INDIANA

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ABSTRACT

THESIS: The Developmental History of Civil War Prisons in Indiana and Illinois.

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Many Civil War properties still exist, though only one prison camp from the western theater is still interpreted and little in the way of research has been conducted on the built environment of these sites throughout the North and the South. Therefore, addressing how the Civil War Prison Camps in Illinois (Camp Butler, Camp Douglas, Rock Island, and Alton Penitentiary) and Indiana (Camp Morton) developed throughout their use by the United State War Department is essential for those studying about Civil War-era prisoner of war camps. Currently, this topic is hidden in published documents regarding the entire site and other stories that may involve the camp. There are only remnants of the built environment that still remain on the original sites such as the small cell wall from the Alton Military Prison in Alton, Illinois. It is interesting to note how the camp developed structurally, through the materials and labor used. This project has the ability to become significant to historians who question why these sites were dismantled shortly after the war's end and why very few of the structures that were built during this time period remained after the end of the war, especially when dealing with certain construction materials and their lifespan in the open environment. This thesis therefore examines how the prison developed throughout the war, the use of buildings in the area, the local labor provided by the prisoners, and whether there was a standard design for these camps.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>AKNOWLEDGEMENTS</i>	3
LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES	6
<i>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</i>	7
Purpose	8
Historic Context	11
<i>Chapter 2. Camp Morton, Indianapolis, IN</i>	13
Camp Morton “The Years Leading to the War”	14
Training Camp Development	15
Construction as a Prison Camp	18
Following the End of the War	25
Conclusions	29
<i>Chapter 3 Camp Bulter, Springfield, IL</i>	30
War Breaks Out In South Carolina	32
Prisoners Occupy the Site	35
Life After Prisoners	41
Conclusions	44
<i>Chapter 4 Camp Douglas, Chicago, IL</i>	46
The Douglas Estate	47
Camp Douglas as a Training Ground	49
Prisoners Take Up Occupation at Camp Douglas	55
Development Around and Over the Site	75
Conclusions	76
<i>Chapter 5 Alton Military Prison, Alton, IL</i>	79
Illinois’s First Prison	80
Prisoners Arrive at the Vacant Prison	85
Following the War	91
Conclusions	92
<i>Chapter 6 Rock Island Prison Barracks, Rock Island, IL</i>	95
Rock Between Water: Life On Rock Island Before the War	96

Two Years in and Still a Prison Problem	97
Farewell to the Rock	113
<i>Conclusions</i>	116

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figures

<i>Figure 1</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Figure 2</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Figure 3</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Figure 4</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Figure 5</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>Figure 6</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>Figure 7</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>Figure 8</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>Figure 9</i>	<i>58</i>
<i>Figure 10</i>	<i>66</i>
<i>Figure 11</i>	<i>69</i>
<i>Figure 12</i>	<i>82</i>
<i>Figure 13</i>	<i>93</i>
<i>Figure 14</i>	<i>98</i>
<i>Figure 15</i>	<i>102</i>
<i>Figure 16</i>	<i>105</i>
<i>Figure 17</i>	<i>110</i>

Tables

<i>Table A</i>	<i>73</i>
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THE DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY OF CIVIL WAR PRISON CAMPS IN ILLINOIS AND INDIANA

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In all of the research about the American Civil War and the debate about prison camps, one area in particular has been lost to scholarly research. That area consists of a thorough study of the built environment of these camps which includes the reasoning for the location of the site and how and when the buildings being used by the camps were constructed. The object is to see if a centralized plan was active in constructing the prison camps in these areas as they are microcosms of the other prisoner-of-war camps found throughout the Civil War period. Many times these structures are mentioned through correspondence or in reference to the life prisoners led, but they are never thoroughly discussed in the context of when and how they were constructed. The purpose of this thesis is to try to describe the built environment as the war progressed. Focus will be give to the timeframe of when and how structures were placed within the confines of the five prison camps that make up the western theater of battle which

include Camp Morton, Camp Butler, Camp Douglas, Alton Military Prison, and Rock Island Arsenal. All five of these sites are representative of the types of facilities found throughout both the Union and Confederate prison systems, both structurally and developmentally through either the camp reuse of training facilities or through previously abandoned large properties such as the former Illinois State Penitentiary.

Purpose

In April of 1861, upon the attack of Fort Sumter, the Civil War began. At the first battles, it was thought that rather than taking prisoners, either side would simply exchange soldiers, man for man. With the continual escalation in the number of battles raging, more prisoners were being taken because a simple exchange was no longer possible. As a direct result, prison camps were created in the north along the eastern seaboard in previously occupied Union forts. In the Midwest region of Illinois and Indiana there were five such camps. Each camp, however, had a distinct appearance though many of them shared qualities like the reuse of buildings. Throughout this paper and in the subsequent chapters, the factors that caused the differing developments will be addressed and analyzed against each other in order to determine if a larger prison plan was in place at the time.

The landscape surrounding each camp contributed greatly to the design of each camp. With the camps being constructed so quickly, and with little forethought, the buildings were placed in a location that was convenient for the time. For some places,

this worked out well, while others were forced to later change the design of the camp. This movement caused many prison camps to change their appearance several times throughout the course of the war. Again, these issues of development and change as a result of landscape will be addressed later in this paper through the five case study camps.

Architecturally, the camps were similar. By and large, the prisons were quickly constructed with green wood which would expand and shrink as the climates of the region fluctuated. For the most part, the perimeter was enclosed by expansive high-board fencing to keep prisoners in with the only exception being the Alton Military Prisons which had a large stone stockade wall. With few exceptions, barracks were used throughout the camp to house prisoners, in a manner consistent with military occupied housing at the time. The explanation of the prisoners' quarters as well as the guard quarters will be discussed later in this paper. Alton is the exception, with stone cell blocks used to house the inmates near the Mississippi River. Again, a detailed description can be found further in the paper. By using primary and secondary sources throughout, the research will explain how and why these differences occurred.

Up until this point, the research for prison camp construction has been scattered. The architectural significance and development must be compiled in order to get a complete picture of Midwest prison camps during the time of the Civil War. By compiling all this information into one source, future historians can use this research to explain many different problems associated with the camps. Historians can use the

dates of construction and maintenance to buildings and other utilities, in order to make conjectures about the high rates of sickness and death among the prisoners living in the camps. One such example brought up in future chapters is the appalling lack of sinks (large ditch used to substitute as a toilet) at Camp Douglas and how the sewer and water system alleviated much of the problems. With so many men trying to occupy such a small area, not only was dysentery a problem, but smallpox began to rage. Information such as this can be used by many future researchers as evidence for why the men were infected so quickly and in such mass numbers.

From walls to roof trusses, architectural features of Civil War prison camps have been neglected. These are extremely important factors when considering why many things happened both inside and outside the walls of the camp. By compiling all this information not only can one compare the camps of the time, but one can also prove the deplorable conditions lasted for years before any real progress was made while no system for prison camp design was in place for the Union army.

The following chapters are organized by state, with Indiana's Camp Morton first followed by the camps constructed in Illinois. The Illinois camps are then also organized by their date of occupation by Confederate Prisoners. In organizing the chapters in this manner, the reader is able to understand the overall development of the sites as time passes and assess whether there are similarities in the design of the camps. This can be shown in the differences in which Camp Morton, an early camp in Indiana, and Rock Island, a camp built for the sole purpose of confining prisoners, developed over time.

This thesis therefore examines how the prison developed throughout the war, the use of buildings in the area, the local labor provided by the prisoners, and whether there was a standard design regulation for these camps through when and how they were placed on the landscape.

Historic Context

At the beginning of the Civil War, there was little need for the construction or use of large prison camps on either side of the rebellion since neither side believed that the conflict would be carried out over a long period of time. Even after the first shots were fired at Fort Sumter, neither side had a plan to deal with prisoners of war. Those prisoners taken prior to early 1861 were dealt with by placing them among the area's criminals.¹ This philosophy of the exchange of prisoners was reasserted in papers by Abraham Lincoln's administration when they hinted "it would be unpolitic [sic] to hold prisoners until the end of the war."² It was customary to release prisoners on parole and to send them to their respective sides under a flag of truce with the idea that the other side would release "an equal number upon taking their oath not to bear arms."³ With this push by the administrations to exchange prisoners frequently, there was no need to have large scale prison camps. However, after it was recognized that the war would not be over quickly, it became quite clear that arrangements would be necessary for the handling of prisoners of war over longer periods of time.

¹ Lonnie R. Speer, *Portals to Hell: Military Prisons of the Civil War* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, 2005), 9.

² William Best Hesseltine, *Civil War Prisons: A Study of War Psychology* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1998), 10.

³ *Ibid.* 12.

The necessity for large areas of land to house the prisoners taken from the line of battle, made the War Department decide to use coastal fortifications throughout the east coast in places like Fort McHenry in Baltimore and Fort Warren in Boston. However, after the first year of the war, there was a need to expand the prison system to other locations as the prison population was reaching maximum capacity at the original locations. It is also during this time, that there was a need by both sides of the war to establish a commissary of prisoners. Therefore, in October 1861, Lieutenant Colonel William Hoffman was appointed to the position.⁴ Hoffman was a frugal man who only spent money when it was absolutely necessary. However, following key victories at Fort Henry, Tennessee along the Tennessee River and Fort Donelson, Tennessee along the Cumberland River, the North found itself in need of facilities to house these prisoners. It was at this time that "four Union training camps were designated as prisons."⁵ It would be the beginning of a long struggle in handling the prisons throughout the Union, both socially and more importantly, developmentally. What came out of the western camps in Illinois and Indiana shows that the camps that were created after the commissioning of Col. Hoffman, were still deficient in site planning and design as will be illustrated in subsequent chapters as camps developed outward in every direction.

⁴ The Civil War CD-ROM, "Series II-Volume III. Union Correspondence, Orders, Etc. Relating to Prisoners of War and State From February 19, 1861, to June 12, 1862. #2," 7 October 1861, [CD-ROM] (Carmel, IN: Guild Press, 2000).

⁵ Sidney G. Hall III, "Camp Morton: A Model Prison?," *Indiana Military History Journal* 6 (May 1981): 6.

Chapter II: Camp Morton, Indianapolis, Indiana

Camp Morton, named for the honored Governor Oliver P. Morton, began the Civil War as a rendezvous point for men from Indiana to muster in and form regiments immediately after Lincoln's call for 75,000 men. The camp originated from land previously owned by the first Indianapolis Mayor Samuel Henderson. Yet, by 1862 the camp's focus changed drastically upon becoming a prison camp for Confederate soldiers. More than 15,000 Confederate soldiers were taken prisoner after victories at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson. This influx of prisoners drastically overcrowded an already very small prison system, which was still not developed. Upon receiving word about the capture of so many rebel prisoners, Governor Morton opened Camp Morton up to the United States government to house some of these prisoners. At the point that the Confederate prisoners were arriving at Camp Morton, changes were already underway. The small grassy field that once was home to picnic lunches would become dark home to thousands of rebel prisoners over the next four years. The development of Camp Morton begins even before the outbreak of the war, and even after the camp was decommissioned, most of the structures that were constructed during the war were handed over to the Indiana State Fairgrounds. The following chapter examines the build-up structurally of the camp through the haphazard expansion of the camp to the east,

through the decommissioning of the camp, upon the grounds return to the Indiana State Fair Grounds.

Camp Morton “The Years Leading to the War”

Prior to the outbreak of the American Civil War, the thirty-six acre tract of land that housed the camp was known as Henderson’s Grove. The acreage was named after Samuel Henderson who became the first mayor of Indianapolis in 1846, and who had owned the property which made up thirty-six acres of his farmstead. The area was known for its beauty, which was evident through the wonderful trees and small ditch, known as the “State Ditch,” which helped comprise the site.⁶

By the end of the 1850’s, talk was beginning about using this acreage as the site for the new State Fairgrounds because of its distance from the city, which was neither too close nor too far away to be reached conveniently.⁷ In 1859, the property was taken over by the State Fairgrounds and structures were erected to house machinery and animals. As part of this construction a long shed was built with the south side of the shed left open to the weather.⁸ The shed is said to have had a strong roof and board and batten siding. However, it can be hypothesized that the battens that were placed on the structure were still green, because following the housing of the prisoners in the shed,

⁶ Hattie Lou Winslow and Joseph H. Moore, *Camp Morton 1861-1865: Indianapolis Prison Camp* (Indianapolis, IN: Indian Historical Society, 1995), 1-2.

⁷ *Ibid*, 2.

⁸ *Ibid*, 2-3.

they complained that the wind went through the cracks that had developed over time. On the west side of the property, there were “250 stalls for cattle, with shed for the prized sheep and hogs, [which were] all well covered” along with an exhibition hall.⁹ Near the east side of the property was a large dining hall for food preparation during fair activities. The only two-story building located on the site during this time period belonged to the office building which housed “several sizable rooms.”¹⁰ Other features found throughout the sites consisted of five wells which were the only water sources found on the site, other than the ditch which was dry most of the year. The interesting thing to note was the architectural style which was used to create at least one of the structures on the site. This structure, which was located near the entrance gate during the occupation by the prisoners, was designed in the Gothic Revival style. It had a front pedimented roof with a gingerbread vergeboard over the main entrance. No other information exists about the construction of these buildings as they stood during the occupation of the fairgrounds.

Training Camp Development:

Following the outbreak of the war and President Lincoln’s call for 75,000 men to join the ranks of the United States Army, Governor Oliver P. Morton volunteered 10,000 of Indiana’s finest young men to fight. It was at this time that Governor Morton needed to find a suitable location for the training of these 10,000 troops that would be large

⁹ *Ibid*, 3.

¹⁰ *Ibid*.

enough and still provide adequate shelter. An area just west of the State house was considered but was declined, in part because it was not large enough. It was then decided that the area known as Henderson Grove, the newly acquired Indiana State Fairground, would be most applicable because of its size and its already existing buildings.

The buildings and their uses were drastically changed after the fairgrounds were converted to a “recruitment and instruction camp for Indiana volunteers.”¹¹ Many of these existing buildings were converted to offices. The office located near the entrance was made into the headquarters for the commanding officers.

“The first floor of the committee became the quartermaster’s office; the second floor was the medical inspector’s office;... the large dining hall was the commissary’s store;... the treasurer’s office became the guardhouse; and the power hall was fitted up as a hospital.”¹²

The remaining buildings on the site were fitted with bunks. With a need to supply more housing for Indiana volunteers, an area on both the east side and south side of the property was built up with another row of sheds that were open on one side. The row of stalls that was constructed on the south side of the property was said to be as close to the State Ditch as possible.¹³ Again in the hastily designed sheds that were produced, it is believed they used green lumber to produce “boards ten to twelve inches wide, and battens four inches wide,” as the soldiers complained about the drafts that

¹¹ Speer, 75.

¹² Winslow and Moore, 4.

¹³ *Ibid*, 4-5.

came through the walls.¹⁴ The stalls constructed on the south side of the property were closed on all four sides, with large barn doors as the only entrance at each end. On the two long sides, four tiers of bunks extended seven feet inward. The first tier was located a foot off the ground, the second tier was located three feet above the first, the third was three feet above the second. The floor served as the fourth tier. It is said that “there was space enough between the two rows of bunks for long tables, serving as dining tables.”¹⁵ The camp was bounded by a high board fence constructed of two inch oak

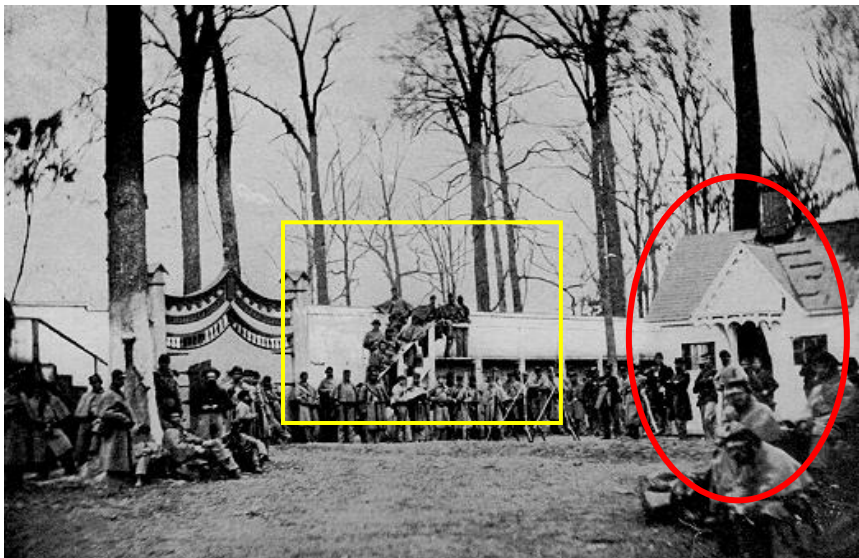


Figure 1: Guard and Guard-house at Camp Morton near Indianapolis, Indiana. It also depicts the Gothic Revival architecture of the time. Source: Thomas Sturgis, *Prisoners of War, 1861-65: A record of personal experiences, and a study of the condition and treatment of prisoners on both sides during the war of the Rebellion*. New York: Putnam and Son's, 1912.

planks, with a cat walk on the outside portion of the fence which was four feet below the top of the wall¹⁶, constructed by April 21, 1861¹⁷ (Figure 1).

Even after the construction of new stalls and sheds

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 5.

¹⁵ *Ibid*.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 20.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 5. Letter of Herman Bamberger, dated April 21, 1861 in *Indianapolis News*, May 18, 1914, p.10, c. l.

to be used as barracks, there was a need for additional housing. Therefore the barracks were supplemented with tents. Unlike the barracks that were heated with several small stoves, the tents needed another means of keeping warm. Therefore,

“Colonel A.D. Streight, conceived the idea of warming their tents by constructing a series of hot-air furnaces. Beneath each tent was dug a trench some feet longer than the diameter of the tent and covered first with stone, and then with earth. At one end a huge square hole served as a furnace mouth and the smoke, escaping through a chimney at the other end, warmed the earth.”¹⁸

As more troops reported to the camp, there was a need to distribute mail. As a result, a post office was commissioned and was constructed near the State Ditch. When the troops were not taking part in drills, they were repairing their own barracks. By this point in time, the camp had been structurally set until the incorporation of prisoners of war began arriving upon the fall of Fort Donelson and Fort Henry in February 1862.

Construction as a Prison Camp

When the camp was converted to a prison camp, measures were needed to accommodate the increase in the number of prisoners. Lieutenant Colonel William Hoffman, Commissary General of Prisons, liked the idea of transforming training grounds into prison camps because of their access to railroads and the fact that they already contained a form of barracks to shelter prisoners.¹⁹ Hoffman also liked the idea

¹⁸ Ibid, 6.

¹⁹ Speer, 12.

of using county and state fairgrounds, as they provided more than enough space for additional barracks or tents.²⁰

As part of the renovation process, the stalls along the north fence were renovated “to provide six apartments for sleeping purposes and one for eating purposes.”²¹ Similarly, barracks were again constructed, this time using lumber from previous temporary stables found on site.²² Consequently, with the massive influx of sick prisoners from Fort Henry and Donelson, the camp “secured two buildings on Meridian Street”, one of which was the Gymnasium Building, on the northeast corner of Meridian and Maryland which was operational by March 6, 1863.²³ The second building functioning on Meridian was the old four-story post office. It was near the corner of Washington and was contracted out by March 5. The “first and second floor [were] divided into two wards each and preparations were made for similar arrangements of the two upper stories.”²⁴ However, currently it is not known who received the contract to remodel the facility. The hospital in the Gymnasium only lasted a short time before being dismantled.

In the transformation of the camp into a prison, the latrine areas were the one section that was not renovated. The latrines consisted of large dug out pits that were

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Winslow and Moore, 19.

²² The Civil War CD-ROM, "Series II-Volume III. Union Correspondence, Orders, Etc. Relating to Prisoners of War and State From February 19, 1861, to June 12, 1862. #13," 28 February 1862, [CD-ROM] (Carmel, IN: Guild Press, 2000). The remaining references to this resource, will be referred to as CW.

²³ Winslow and Moore, 69.

²⁴ Ibid. 71.

located near the center of the camp. As the pits became filled, the camp would fill the remaining hole with lime and then move the pits elsewhere on the site. However, the locations of the latrines early on as a training facility were placed on the lower edge of the camp, which was well below the level of the spring.

On March 5, 1862, an order was given by Lieutenant Colonel William Hoffman for the construction of a bake house. By April 14th the bake house was in operation providing baked goods for more than 5,000 prisoners and guards.²⁵ The bake house consisted of “one large room with a floor, a shingle roof, and closed in with upright boarding, battened.”²⁶ At the same time the orders were given to construct a bake house, Hoffman also ordered that windows be installed in the barracks that were just put up to allow “enough air and light,” while also trying to provide more room by possibly taking out several bunks.²⁷ It is not known whether the latter part was done, however on March 23, 1862 a letter from Hoffman to Captain Ekin requested that the bunks be rearranged to accommodate more light and make the barracks more comfortable.²⁸ Hoffman had also given direction to construct an extension to the city hospital which would measure “100 foot long, forty-one or forty-two feet wide, three stories high, with a hall dividing each floor into two long wards.”²⁹ It was also ordered that the windows in the extension be single sash so they could be raised up and let

²⁵ CW, #17, 7 April 1862.

²⁶ Ibid, #15, 18 March 1862.

²⁷ Ibid, #12, 12 March 1862.

²⁸ Ibid, #16, 23 March 1862.

²⁹ Ibid, #15, 18 March 1862.

down. At the receiving hospital, alterations were being made to accommodate more of the sick, by adding a second or half floor to the building. Up until this point, buildings were being built haphazardly with little plan in mind, yet in June of 1862 it was ordered to “lay off the ground according to some plan and locate the buildings which may hereafter be put up compactly on the best ground.”³⁰ This idea cannot be verified and though looking at the way it developed over the next four years, there was no planned lay out at all to the camp and its new construction.

By the latter half of 1862, more work was being done to create a sanitary hospital environment. As part of this strategy, a bid of \$100 was made to do house cleaning and whitewashing of the hospital walls.³¹ But the hospital was not the only casualty to the repair cycle. In a report from H.W. Freedley to Hoffman, Freedley commented that the barracks and other buildings were “dilapidated and sadly in need of repair.”³² The repairs would begin to take place following the parole of the prisoners by September 1862, though it is not known what renovations were made to the structures on the site. Still, by January 1863, the vacant buildings were already falling into poor condition.³³ The repairs made to the buildings during this period were not very substantial, if done at all. This is in part due to the troops that were taking part in the repair being reorganized and deployed through the country.

³⁰ Ibid, #24, 1 June 1862.

³¹ Ibid, Series II- Volume IV, #20, 2 September 1862.

³² Ibid, Series II-Volume V. Union Correspondence, Orders, Etc. Relating to Prisoners of War and State From December 1, 1862, to June 10, 1863. #10," 30 January 1863.

³³ James R. Hall, *Den of Misery: Indiana's Civil War Prison* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 2006), 40.

By the end of 1862, there were thirteen buildings located throughout the center of the camp, consisting of four barracks, sutler (trading post or general store), the surgeon, the receiving hospital, the preaching stand, post office, dispensary, the doctor, and the picture cart. In February 1863, Freedley commented that Captain Ekin had “furnished a carpenter and had some bunks constructed, additional windows, glazing and window sash[es] supplied and other repairs made.”³⁴

Of these buildings located in the center of the camp, five were large frame buildings that held prisoners, including the old hospital. The dimensions of the five buildings were: “one 40 by 24 ft, one 110 by 20 ft, two 100 by 20, and one 120 by 20.”³⁵ The dimensions of the buildings used as hospitals within the camp are: “one 40 by 24 feet, the other [is] 100 by 24.”³⁶

However, by the end of October 1863, the condition of the built environment throughout camp was horrible. In a report from A.M. Clark, Surgeon General and Acting Medical Inspector of Prisoners of War, he states that the barracks and tents are in dilapidated condition with poor ventilation. He also noted that only a few stoves were found within the barracks to provide heat in the chilly winter months. In this report, he states that there are two hospital buildings, both in dilapidated condition and unfit for use, while there are six hospital tents which are “destitute of stoves or other means of

³⁴ CW, Series II-Volume V. #11, 9 February 1863.

³⁵ Ibid, 24 March 1863.

³⁶ Ibid.

heating.”³⁷ By this time, commands had already been given to erect two additional hospital barracks. While the new additional hospital barracks were being constructed, a few of the old prisoner barracks were being repaired to accommodate 3,000 prisoners.³⁸ Consequently, by late January 1864, the two new hospital barracks were completed and the new commandant of the camp, Colonel Stevens, was rapidly improving the camp.

Even as the camp housed prisoners of war, it also contained a prison within its walls. The building was built during the winter months in 1863 as it was completed at least by January 1864. The building

“was a stout structure for that time, with walls, floor, ceiling and doors all made of two thicknesses of two inch planking. It had four fifteen-square foot cells, ventilated by overhead grating; a main prison room twenty-four by thirty feet; a “dungeon” sixteen feet square; and office and guardroom twelve by twenty-four feet.”³⁹

It is by early 1864 that the built environment was being reconstructed underneath the camp due to the many tunneling efforts made by the prisoners. Several of the attempts from barracks along the north wall of the camp, caused real problems for the guards. Because of a poor design which used the north wall as the palisade it was easy for prisoners to tunnel from the confines of their own barracks and make a break for it. Often, the prisoners would sprinkle their tunneling dirt around the camp, so as not to be noticed. They also helped their reasoning in staying warm by tunneling. As it rained mud developed within the barracks because of the dirt floor. As the dirt became

³⁷ Ibid, Series II-Volume VI, Union and Confederate Correspondence, Orders, Etc, Relating to Prisoners of War and State From June 11, 1863, to March 31, 1864. #17, 26 October 1863.

³⁸ Ibid, 9 November 1863.

³⁹ Hall, 53.

moist, they started to fill the gaps in between the board and battens. Yet, these attempts were suddenly deterred when Colonel Stevens demolished the northern twenty feet of the barracks along the north wall. He also put the prisoners to work in creating a trench between the barracks and the fence to help deter escapes. The trench constructed by the prisoners was ten feet wide and six feet deep.⁴⁰ As a further effort to deter escape attempts, a “sturdy board enclosure was erected inside the old wall.”⁴¹ This effort never really solved the problem of tunneling. However from this point to the end of the war several attempts were made for the acquisition of funds to raise the

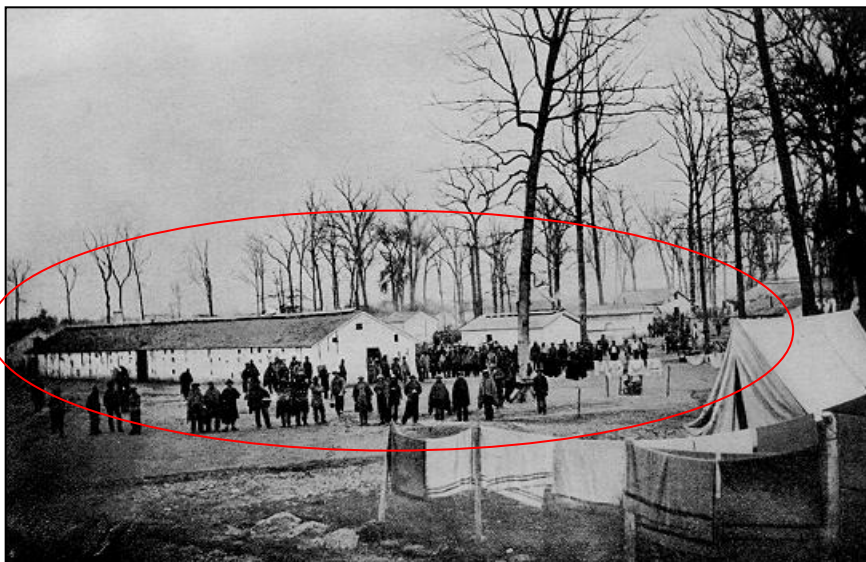


Figure 2: Inside of Camp Morton. The barracks in the background show where relative windows were in the facility along with the large barn door previously mentioned and the idea of a ridge cap to allow for air flow. The windows were added in March 1862. Sources: Thomas Sturgis, *Prisoners of War, 1861-65: A record of personal experiences, and a study of the condition and treatment of prisoners on both sides during the war of the Rebellion*. New York: Putnam and Son's, 1912.

barracks at least two feet with the substantial floor constructed in them. The raising of the floor would allow an open space to be seen under the barrack. It was also supported by a health issue

⁴⁰ Ibid, Series II- Volume VII, 29 April 1864

⁴¹ Hall, 54.

because by raising the floor two feet, it would promote better ventilation. Still, the idea never passed and the tunneling continued.

As the barracks became increasingly dilapidated few improvements were made to secure the structure of the buildings. The one alteration made by April 1864 was the addition of ridge vents shown in figure 2. Another amenity by this time was the addition of a laundry to the site. A feature less pleasing to the prisoners was the erection of a “Dead house,” which was built by the prisoners from refuse lumber.⁴²

Still with the ever changing built environment around the prison, there was little time when alterations or additions were not going on. By August 1864, there were seven wooden barracks, five measuring 140 by 22 feet, two 100 by 20 feet, and one shed 350 feet by 12 feet. The shed was still remaining from its time as a fairground. Yet, the biggest improvement would come from a letter from Surgeon Alexander to Colonel Hoffman which stated that a priority for the camp is its enlargement.⁴³ Only a week after the recommendation for the enlargement of the camp, Colonel Hoffman had approved the measure. The ground that would be taken was already in possession of the United States. He also stated that once the enlargement is finished, to begin filling it with tents and to relieve the overcrowding of the other barracks and tents located on

⁴² CW, Series II- Volume VII, 29 April 1864.

⁴³ Ibid. #23, 6 August 1984.

the site. With approval of the expansion, the camp was enlarged to twice its original

size.⁴⁴

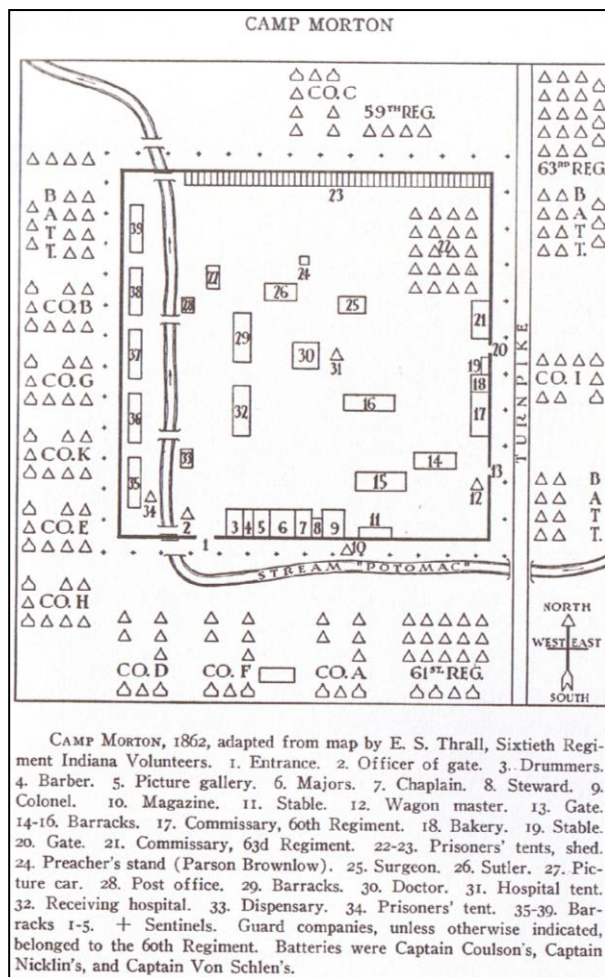


Figure 3: Camp Morton in 1862, adapted from a map by E.S. Thrall, Sixtieth Regiment Indiana Vol. Source: Winslow and Moore, p 41.

With the enlargement came another installation of a hospital with two wards, each consisting of 110 by 25 feet, with 9 ½ feet elevations with eight windows per side. Within the wards there was a clothes-room, bathing-room, and a closet. To accommodate the food preparation needs, a building 20 by 60 feet was built to house the mess hall and kitchen. There was also an administration building added near the hospital which measured 24 by 75 feet. Within the administration

building was a room for “the surgeon, 12 by 15 feet; an office, 12 by 15 feet; a dispensary, 15 by 24; store room, 15 by 24; and a room for attendants, 15 by 24 feet.”⁴⁵

However, it was stated that these buildings would be constructed without framing.

Hoffman instructed men to set the post in the ground and spike the joist (3 by 8 inch) to

⁴⁴ Ibid. #27, 16 August 1964.

⁴⁵ Ibid. #33, 14 September 1864.

them and ordered that all other timbers used must be 3 by 4. The roof would be covered with felt roofing and the floors would be raised for good ventilation.⁴⁶ Still, even with the advent of this new hospital authorized, it was not completed until mid to late October.⁴⁷

Following the completion of the last two wards, Colonel Stevens was given the orders to proceed by Hoffman to construct another four wards for hospital purposes while vacating the old wards and using them as barracks. It was stated by Hoffman that he wanted the old wards transformed first to allow the overcrowding of other barracks to

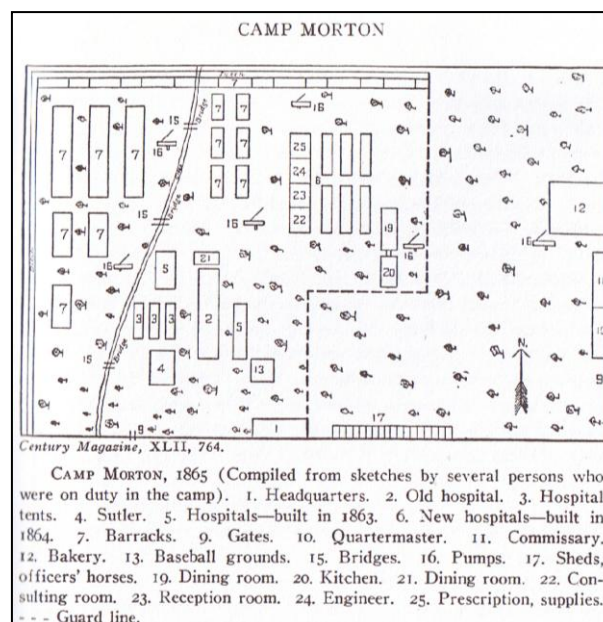


Figure 4: Camp Morton in 1865 showing the addition that was constructed in 1864. Source: Winslow and Moore, 123.

diminish; however the four wards were built first through the acquisition of spare lumber from throughout the camp. After the completion of the four wards, Major Blagden ordered Colonel Stevens to plaster the walls within the six newly constructed wards.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid. #42, 24 October 1864. The ward of the hospital were completed October 24, 1864, but the administration building and kitchen were nearly finished by this time.

⁴⁸ Ibid. #49, 7 December 1864.

Following another outbreak of sickness throughout camp, the additions of three more wards was requested. The three wards were granted with the stipulation that they would be constructed in the same manner as the previous six wards. In the three wards that were commissioned to be constructed, the labor was going to be done by the prisoners as far as it was practical.⁴⁹

Following the End of the War

With the completion of this project, no other sizable construction took place on the site prior to vacating the property on August 2, 1865. The argument can be made that by the completion of the war the expansion of the camp and the construction of the buildings within the palisade walls was not constructed in any sort of plan. It was as though the camp continued to be constructed and formed haphazardly. However, by July 1865, the property that was bought with the prison fund was sold at auction and the claim made by the State Board of Agriculture for damages to the original fairgrounds that totaled \$9,816.56. The funds collected as part of the damage mitigation were spent to rehabilitate the site for its use as the fairgrounds until the 1890's.⁵⁰ However, the beautiful landscape of trees and the running stream that once was located on the site was scrapped for firewood and latrine pits.

⁴⁹ Ibid, Series II-Volume VIII, 26 January 1865.

⁵⁰ Winslow and Moore, 139-140.

The current location of the camp is located between Nineteenth Street, Talbott Avenue, Twenty-Second Street, and Central Avenue⁵¹ as part of the Herron-Morton Place. The site is currently marked by a boulder placed at Alabama and Nineteenth Streets which is approximately where the main entrance once opened. The boulder was placed there in 1916 by the teachers and students of School Forty-five.

Conclusion

In looking at the way buildings were constructed in a hasty manner and the ever-changing cycle of hospital arrangements, it is hard to believe that there could have been a plan of development for the camp as it unsystematically expanded to the east with randomly placed structures located on the landscape. From what one can tell, the plan consisted of building in areas of dry ground. Another problem lies in the fact that the camp developed outside of the boundary of the camp walls, through the necessity for hospitals and other barracks for guards. However, the five acres within the walls of the camp changed drastically in this four to five-year period of time that brought on the construction of many clustered structures and the demolition of a once beautiful landscape.

⁵¹ Ibid, 1.

Chapter III: Camp Butler: Springfield, IL

Camp Butler would have much the same beginning as Camp Morton. Throughout the middle of the 1860's, the area occupied by the Federal Government for use as a training ground and prisoner of war camp, was a quiet, rural, agrarian location. Much of the area later occupied by the camps was used by the local farmers for crops and livestock grazing. The other portion of the campsite consisted of a spring-fed pond known as Clear Lake. Though the main encampment was located around Clear Lake, the prisoner-of-war camp was located to the west of the main encampment on a fifteen-acre site, currently located on the grounds housing the Camp Butler National Cemetery.⁵² Though most of the research deals with the developmental history of the fifteen-acre site used to house Confederate prisoners of war, I will give brief attention to the development of the rest of the camp because the development around the camp plays a large role in the development of the previously established sites. Although the actual owner of the property used by the camp is uncertain at the time it is known that while the camp was being used, the United States Government was paying rent on the property. Since, the camp had been moved from the first location near Clear Lake, one might think that better organization of the camp would have taken place during its construction similar to that of Rock Island where the barracks were nicely placed in rows

⁵² Emma Eliza Parrotte, "History of Camp Butler" (MA Thesis, Butler University, 1938), 8.

allowing for streets to be created in between barracks. Yet, when the camp was moved, there was little indication that the site would be transformed from the main training

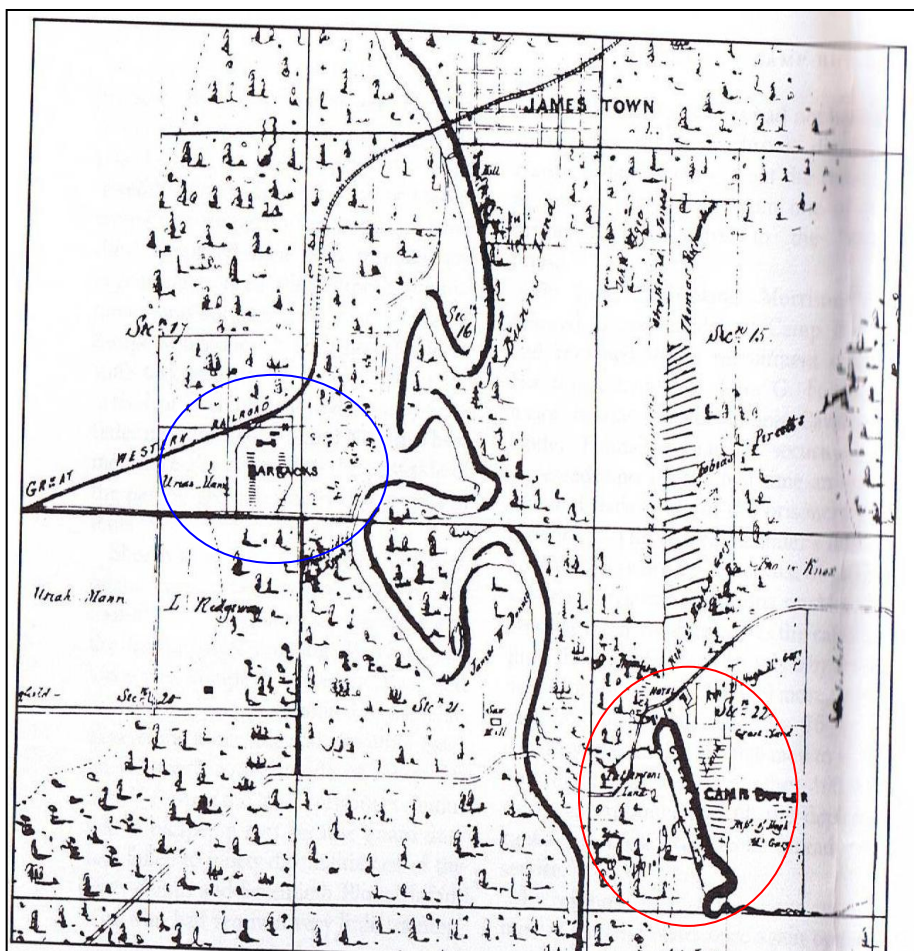


Figure 5. This map drawn in 1863 by an anonymous artist, shows the first location of the camp and then the second location closer to the railroad lines. The blue circle in the upper left shows the second location while the red circle in the lower right shows the first location of the camp. Source: Peterson, William. "A History of Camp Butler, 1861-1866." *Journal of The Illinois State Historical Society* (Summer 1989):78.

camp for Illinois to a centralized prison camp for Confederate soldiers from the western theater of the war. The camp was already in place and active by the time the prisoners arrived, causing

the rehabilitation of several buildings to be used for other purposes such as hospitals and barracks or in some instances barracks being used at both a hospital and barrack due to lack of space. The camp would change drastically during its two-year stint as a prison camp, though it would maintain the development that took place during that

time and the already reasonably placed structures prior to the camp accepting prisoner, before being converted back to a training facility.

War breaks out in South Carolina

As the cannon fired on Fort Sumter in April of 1861, the State of Illinois was committed to sending troops in response to Lincoln's call for 75,000 men to stop this rebellion. Upon Lincoln's request, the state of Illinois had two training locations within the state. The main training ground was located in Camp Douglas in Chicago and the other, Camp Yates, was located on the west side of Springfield, IL on what was once the old state fairgrounds. However, this training facility was beginning to take criticism from the citizens of the area because of "damaged property, stolen poultry, and harassment by drunken soldiers."⁵³ The thought of creating a new larger training facility to be the "primary center of concentration and training for Union recruits in Illinois"⁵⁴ was already under discussion by April 2, 1861.⁵⁵ Consequently, the process was sped up with the tremendous victory by the Confederates at the Battle of First Bull Run, which created a need for another 500,000 union men. The state of Illinois responded with the creation of another twenty-three regiments mustered and trained in the soon-to-be constructed Camp Butler.

⁵³ William Peterson, "A History of Camp Butler, 1861-1866," *Journal of The Illinois State Historical Society* (Summer 1989):75.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Helen Edith Sheppley, "Camp Butler in the Civil War Days," *Journal of The Illinois State Historical Society* (April, 1932- January, 1933): 287.

At the outset of trying to find a suitable location on the east side of Springfield, Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, and Illinois State Treasurer William Butler began scouring the countryside to find a viable location for the new camp. They finally settled on an area nestled along a spring-fed lake known as Clear Lake.⁵⁶ Still, it would not take long before this site would become unneeded and a need arose for a newer Camp Butler to be constructed. The exact date of the opening of the newer additional Camp Butler is not known. However, the camp became less important when the officers moved the camp to higher ground near Jimtown, currently called Riverton.⁵⁷ This new position was chosen due to its location where the Wabash, St. Louis and Pacific Railroads crossed the Sangamon River and would be known as the Lincoln Barracks.⁵⁸ The idea of locating the camp along the railroad lines was to allow for faster and easier movement of troops to the front lines after the training was over. The camp was divided into three separate areas, depending on regimental assignments with the

“Principal encampment on the shores of Clear Lake, the supplementary infantry encampment a short distance north of the road [now Route 10], and the cavalry encampment nearly three-quarters of a mile northeast of the lake.”⁵⁹

The structure of this area of camp consisted of one company per barrack with enough barracks to occupy the entire army stationed on the site, with the exception of the field officers who occupied tents.⁶⁰ The construction of these barracks was consistent with other barracks being built throughout the Civil War which was a single board structure,

⁵⁶ Parrotte, 2.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 3.

⁵⁸ Camilla A. Corlas Quinn, “Forgotten Soldiers: The Confederate Prisoners at Camp Butler 1862-1863,” *Illinois Historical Journal*, vol. 81 (Spring 1988): 37.

⁵⁹ Parrotte, 8. And “Camp Butler,” *Illinois State Journal*, 6 Sept. 1861, p.1, col. 3.

⁶⁰ Shepply, 287.

with three tiers of bunks and a stove. The building's dimensions also remained fairly consistent as they ran 120'x 15'x 8'. The contract for constructing these barracks was given to the 46th Regiment who all worked as carpenters.⁶¹

One of the other main military establishments was the parade grounds which was located to the west of the main encampment on an elliptical plan located on what is now Roselawn Memorial Park. The plan had a long axis half a mile long, and a short axis a quarter of a mile long. This amount of room gave enough space for drilling to take place for large brigade or division military exercises.⁶²

To the west of the present site of the camp is the prison stockade.⁶³ The location of the stockade is only mentioned once by Helen Van Cleve Blankmeyer and many other sources conclude that it has never been determined where the stockade was located. However, what is known is that the stockade, consisting of fifteen acres, was surrounded by a twelve-foot high board fence. The barracks in this area of the camp were also constructed by the 46th Regiment used as carpenters. With nearly six hundred men on the regiment, the work in constructing the barracks was done quite quickly.⁶⁴ The original contract for the camp was given in "the fall of 1861, to Merriam and Dorman of Quincy to furnish fifty loads of lumber for the building of the barracks."⁶⁵ The construction of these barracks consisted of "single boards form[ing] the floor, the sides,

⁶¹ Ibid, 288

⁶² Parrotte, 8.

⁶³ Helen Van Cleve Blankmeyer, *The History of the Sangamon Country* (Springfield, IL: Phillips Bros., 1935), 46.

⁶⁴ Parrotte, 9. and "Barracks at Camp Butler," *Illinois State Journal*, 27 Nov. 1861, p.3, col. 2.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

and the roof; the sides were low and the roofs were covered with tarred paper.”⁶⁶ After its construction many of the men who were still camped out in the tents throughout the grounds were happy to move into these new barracks. It was in this area by February 22, 1862 that Confederate Prisoners began occupying this site.

Prisoners Occupy the Site

As the war progressed and more and more prisoners were being taken captive by Union forces in the East, the few prisons located along the eastern seaboard became grossly over populated by 1862. By February 16, 1862, following key victories at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson in the western theater, the North found itself in need of facilities to house prisoners in closer locations. It is at this time that four new camps were created in the west, one of which was Camp Butler.

On February 22, 1862, following a harsh train ride into the north, the prisoners were put on parade for the citizens of Springfield. The prisoners would be occupying the area to the west of the present Camp Butler. Upon entering the right side of the west camp, which contained the Confederate prisoners, were several rows of barracks, fifteen in all, each of which housed seventy-five to one hundred prisoners. Sitting directly in front of the barracks on the main street running through this portion of camp were two rows of tents, totaling two thousand, also occupied by Confederate prisoners.⁶⁷ However, after the cold and rainy trip to Springfield from Tennessee, the

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Quinn, 37. and Sheppley, 288.

men were already falling ill. The prisoners who were ill upon arrival created a strong need for hospitals and medical treatment only several weeks into the camp's existence. The hospital being used had already been established by the Federal government for use in the training camp by the time the Confederate prisoners had arrived.

Through early March, 1862, the western camp that housed the prisoners was still strictly guarded by federal troops because a stockade fence was not established by this point. However, it was beginning to be mentioned by Lieut. Col. Hoffman who also states that it would cost "\$1,500 to enclose [sic] the barracks they occupy."⁶⁸ The idea of a large stockade fence was first mentioned by the *Illinois State Journal* in late February because Camp Douglas had just erected their new fence.⁶⁹ It would only be eleven days after the letter stating that the prisoners' barracks were not enclosed that Quartermaster General M.C. Meigs ordered that they be "inclosed [sic] by the erection of a fence in conformity with the suggestions of Col. Hoffman."⁷⁰ Though the construction of the fence was underway, so was the erection of several more barracks along with the high board fence.⁷¹ However, the date of the completion of the fence is still unknown. The *Illinois State Journal* reports the fence completed by May 6, 1862⁷² while the writing of H.W. Freedley to Col. Hoffman on July 19, 1862 states that it was

⁶⁸ The Civil War CD-ROM, "Series II-Volume III. Union Correspondence, Orders, Etc. Relating to Prisoners of War and State From February 19, 1861, to June 12, 1862. #14," 10 March 186, [CD-ROM] (Carmel, IN: Guild Press, 2000).

⁶⁹ "The Secesh Prisoners," *Illinois State Journal*, 28 Feb. 1862, p.3, col. 6.

⁷⁰ CW, #15, 21 March 1862.

⁷¹ "The Prisoners of Island No. Ten," *Illinois State Journal*, 11 April 1862, p.3, col. 2. and "Arrivals of Prisoners at Camp Butler" *Illinois State Journal*, 14 April 1862, p.3, col.2.

⁷² "Camp Butler," *Illinois State Journal*, 6 May 1862, p.3, col.2.

nearly finished by then.⁷³ The new fence would have two sets of gates attached to it with one large set of wooden gates and another smaller set of wicket gates.⁷⁴ Upon feeling more comfortable about the developing construction of the fence, the attention of the commander turned to the construction of a new guardhouse. The current one was being used for both the prisoners and the troops. It was constructed originally as a “common frame building.”⁷⁵ There also seemed to be a need for the addition of another hospital to be used as a fever hospital, which made seven hospitals by this time.

Many of the hospitals in this small camp were segregated by the prognosis and diagnoses. At least one of the hospitals was used for pneumonia and another for use as an erysipelas hospital.⁷⁶



Figure 6. Image of Camp Butler in 1862 showing the parade grounds, the administration buildings, and the barracks on either side of the administration buildings. Source: Photograph Collection, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

Consequently, as the war went on, so did the once very small

⁷³ CW #10, 19 July 1862.

⁷⁴ “General Order No. 55” Illinois State Journal, 7 May 1862, p. 3, col. 2.

⁷⁵ CW #10, 19 July 1862.

⁷⁶ Sheppley, 299.

training camp. Still, by July 17, 1862, a new camp was being added south of and adjacent to the present barracks because of its available water supply through wells and the necessity of having the river within a half a mile, for a large influx of Illinois soldiers who would be mustering in and training at the camp.⁷⁷ By July 21, 1862, the camp was enclosing fifteen acres of land, including the training facility. The barracks of both the prisoners and the troops were wretchedly constructed of single board forming the exterior of the building with a roof only covered by tar paper. On the west side of the camp were several rows barracks still with two rows of tents fronting the barracks. Of these several rows of barracks, four of the barracks were used as hospitals while another part of a barracks was used as a drug store. The other two hospitals were located outside of the barracks rows but all of the six hospitals were fitted with wooden bunks and straw as bedding, and nothing in the way of good ventilation other than small windows.⁷⁸ Still, the condition of the camp never really got much better than it was in the beginning.

With one round of the prisoner exchange and oath of allegiance taking place by early September,⁷⁹ the prison was empty by Sept. 12 1862. The barracks that were previously occupied by the prisoners were being "overhauled, cleaned up, and purified."⁸⁰ It is not exactly known what is meant by this but it is a guess that the barracks were generally cleaned and whitewashed on the interior and exterior of each

⁷⁷ "The New Camp," Illinois State Journal, 17 July 1862, p.3, col.3.; Sheppley, 301.; Peterson, 81.

⁷⁸ Ibid. Series II--Volume IV Union Correspondence, Orders, Etc., Relating to Prisoners of War and State From June 13, 1862, to November 30, 1862.#11, 21 July 1862.

⁷⁹ The Prisoners Going," Illinois State Journal, 6 Sept. 1862, p.3. col. 2.

⁸⁰ "The Prison Barracks," Illinois State Journal, 12 Sept. 1862, p.3, col. 3.

of the barracks. The built environment throughout the camp was beginning to have small alterations applied to it. It is reported on November 4, 1862 that barracks were being added to accommodate another round of troops coming to Camp Butler for training. These buildings are stated as having to accommodate four to five thousand men. It is not until late January that any significant changes took place, yet the change that happened took its toll on the already minimal hospital facilities. On January 31, 1863, a fire was seen coming from an “old shant[y]”, which was used as a hospital, as it burned to the ground. Yet, it is reported that there was little loss sustained.⁸¹ By March 21, 1863, the prisoners were now being housed in twenty-one barracks which could hold one hundred men in each.⁸²

At this time Freedley reported to Col. Hoffman that the camp was in serious disarray and that the barracks were in need of repair. Freedley stated that new bunks needed to be constructed and ventilation needed to be added while the floor and roof repairs were a must. He also states that no real repairs had been made to the camp “for some time.”⁸³ By March 24, 1863, the official order was given by the Adjutant General to the Quartermaster to “immediately direct the repair [of] the barracks occupied by the Prisoners of War.”⁸⁴ The first prisoners removed by the exchange cartel were dispatched from camp on their way to City Point, VA in April 7, 1863, with another detachment

⁸¹ “Fire at Camp Butler,” Illinois State Journal, 31 Jan. 1863, p.3, col. 2.

⁸² CW. Series II--Volume V Union Correspondence, Orders, Etc., Relating to Prisoners of War and State From December 1, 1862, to June 10, 1863.#16, 21 March 1863.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Illinois Adjutant General, “Camp Butler (Springfield) Special Orders,” Record Series 301.49, Vol. 1, Feb 18 and March 2, 1863. Illinois State Archives.

leaving two days later.⁸⁵ It was a good thing that they were on their way out the gates, as a large fire was spotted at 3:00 pm April 10, 1863 that started in barrack no. 10. The fire spread rapidly and was finally controlled after it reached barrack no. 20 which was adjacent to the headquarters and torn down to protect documents housed in the headquarters building. Barrack no. 9 which was adjacent to barrack no. 10 also sustained damage but due to the wind direction the fire was limited in that route.⁸⁶ The fire spread so rapidly because of wind and the materials used in the construction of the poorly maintained barracks. The lumber and tar paper used in the roofing accelerated the rate at which the flames spread.

By May 19, 1863, the prisoners that were housed within Camp Butler had been either moved to Camp Douglas or paroled in the exchange cartel. By this time, the camp was becoming more dilapidated. Three of the barracks were torn down because they were used as hospitals though those that remained still measured 80' x 24' with a twenty-foot kitchen attached to each. Eight of the barracks were ready for immediate use, while the other eight still needed bunks to be repaired as they were deteriorated. The camp had taken its final shape as the prisoners walked out the gates on May 19, 1863, as Camp Butler would no longer be used as a prisoner-of-war camp again. Camp Butler did remain active throughout the rest of the war as a training camp and mustering point for the State of Illinois.

⁸⁵ "Removal of Rebel Prisoners," Illinois State Journal, 7 April, 1863, p.3, col.3.

⁸⁶ "Fire at Camp Butler," Illinois State Journal, 11 April, 1863p.3, col. 3.

Life after Prisoners

Following the removal of the prisoners of war, the camp continued as a mustering and training facility and the built environment continued to change. Though the addition of buildings had been completed by this time, the foot print remained. On January 17, 1864, another fire struck the camp and destroyed the officers' barracks located just east of the headquarters building on the north side of camp. Unlike the previous fires at camp, this fire had a tragic ending with two officers being killed while sleeping.⁸⁷ This instance would not be the last fire to strike the camp. On May 29, 1865 a fire was set and "destroyed eight barracks on the west side [formerly the prison barracks] and damaged two others on the east side of the stockade."⁸⁸ In order to control the fire two other barracks on the west were torn down to stop the extent of the damage.⁸⁹ The last fire, December 2, 1865, was also set by someone close to the camp as it destroyed "the two story hospital building and the four adjacent ward to the south and one to the north...the old boarding house had to be torn down to prevent the spread of the fire."⁹⁰

Even after the third fire in January, the camp was continually being cleaned and repaired. By April 9, 1864, the post hospital and general hospital on the site were repaired for use by the soldiers in training. This report also states that the stockade fence had been whitewashed. It is not exactly known why the fence was whitewashed

⁸⁷ Peterson, 85.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 89.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 91.

other than the need to beautify the camp. While the camp was housing prisoners, the whitewash was used as a cleaning device. It is also reported that

“The quartermaster department was housed in a large two story structure, while the commissariat consisted of two smaller buildings. There were fifty-one barracks in camp, as well as seven sutler stores and two guardhouses.”⁹¹

The reasoning behind why there are so many sutler stores throughout the camp

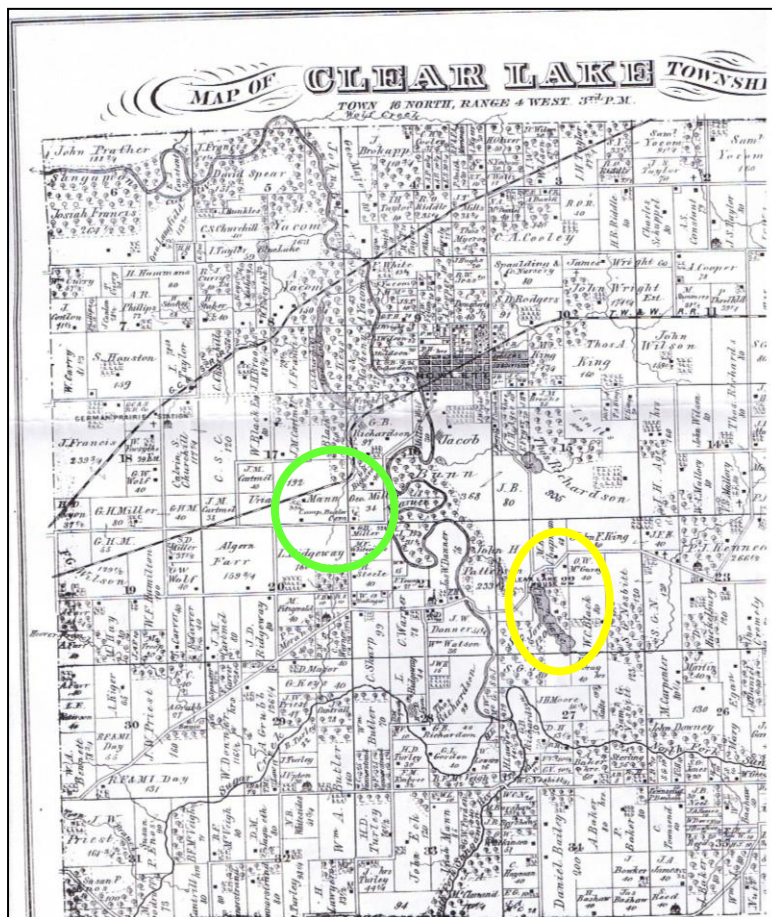


Figure 7. A township map of Clear Lake Township showing the area around Clear Lake being developed along with the area associated with the second camp site near the rail line. Source: *Illustrated Atlas Map of Sangamon County IL*. (n.p.: Brink, McCormick & Co., 1874), 27.

can't be accounted for, however, the two guardhouses were left over from the period of time while it housed the prisoners. It is quite possible that one of the guardhouses was used for the prisoners and the other was used for the soldiers who were training and did illegal or corrupt things such as having alcohol in their possession or causing disturbances among the other soldiers.

⁹¹ Ibid, 86.

By the war's end in 1865 the only two mustering points in Illinois became the only two places to muster out of the army. In September 1865, Camp Douglas was no longer used as a rendezvous point for soldiers returning home, leaving Camp Butler to receive its load of soldiers. It was these soldiers returning from the front lines that began tearing up the camp. The barracks used by the soldiers before catching the Great Western Rail line out of Springfield were destroyed. The Commander at this time was Colonel Prevost, who by this time had also cleaned up the cemetery and purchased the ground in which the dead were consecrated. However, by this point there were no funds available to repair the barracks.⁹² Consequently, before he was replaced by Colonel Andrew Jackson Johnson, Col. Prevost ordered the general hospital torn down. The Surgeon General agreed, as it was no longer a necessity.⁹³ The camp would be closed on June 19, 1866 only a day after the last regiment was mustered out of duty.⁹⁴ Colonel Johnson would transfer the property belonging to the federal government to the quartermaster's department while all other items such as clothing and other small items were shipped to St. Louis.⁹⁵ Throughout July, "all equipment not worth saving was sold at public auction in Springfield."⁹⁶ The last of Camp Butler was sold on August 10, 1866 as the remaining buildings and lumber had been sold ending the camp's rough life as a prisoner of war camp and training facility.⁹⁷ Today most of what was used by the camp has either been reused as cropland or fell into the possession of the Roselawn

⁹² Ibid, 90.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Illinois State Journal, 20 June 1866, p.4, col.1.

⁹⁵ Peterson, 92.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

Cemetery. Only a small portion of the camp site still remains and is now used as the Camp Butler National Cemetery.

Conclusion:

Though Camp Butler was only used as a prisoner of war camp from late 1861 to the end of 1863, the impact left on this site will remain forever, as it is the internment site for thousands of dead soldiers from the Civil War and several other wars since. Very little is known about the actual physical form that the camp took other than the few historic photographs of the camp. Yet, these photographs still don't relay to the viewer which buildings were designed for which purpose. Today the only remnants still remaining above ground are the headstones of the men who lost their lives in camp.

The camp does take an interesting twist that is uncommon with the other camps examined in this report which is the movement of the facility and its construction along the rail line. The only other camp which had the possibility of being moved was Camp Douglas in Chicago due to the unsanitary conditions. It is interesting to note that prior to 1862, the design of the camp was laid out with rows of barracks on either side of a parade ground with the administration buildings being located at either end of the grounds. This design plan would remain until the camp expanded south, when more structures were randomly placed among the landscape. This is the only camp to start with some sort of design plan before breaking from it in later years. It is one of the only camps which continued to house both Union and Confederate troops together without

being separated. This idea of prisoners living among the Union troops is related to the other camp, beside Alton Military Prison, because the Confederate prisoners were being housed in the same conditions as the Union volunteers being trained. It is therefore hard to make the argument that the prisoners were being mistreated and not provided good housing. The prisoners therefore had the same housing and facilities as the Union volunteers even after the design changes in 1862, as the volunteers remained and had to deal with the subsequent changes themselves. Camp Butler began the American Civil War with a centralized design plan but fell victim to adding barracks and other structures outside of the row buildings previously constructed.

Chapter IV: Camp Douglas, Chicago, IL

Camp Douglas is very similar to Camp Butler in the way that it developed originally. This is due to the time in which both camps were being prepared to house the Confederate Prisoners. Both camps were developed from training facilities which had already established the environment for that camp. Both camps were also using the buildings from the previous facilities and making them work to their advantage. The difference between the camps is the amount of prisoners, nearly 8,000, being held at one time in each facility and how each camp was able to deal with the structural and space problems that would occur over time. Camp Butler was closed as a prison camp before it was really able to establish itself, while Camp Douglas was able progress from a decentralized design plan, (limited or documented plan) full of random construction and eastward expansion, to a more centralized plan (plan composed of written documentation expressing logistics of the plan) through the reorganization of the camp to be able to allow for more prisoners to enter the camp. Nearly 30,000 prisoners would pass through the gates of Camp Douglas and pass their time watching the camp expand nearly every day. However, some of those who walked through the gates were carried out in a pine box and buried in the camp cemetery only to be reburied following the war to make way for future development. It seems that the area held the great challenge of

constantly developing and altering during the war, but that same feeling caused the camp to be torn down or sold to make way for the same commercial and residential development.

The Douglas Estate

Prior to the Civil War, the city of Chicago was little more than a small town. It was not until the completion of the Illinois and Michigan Canal in 1848 that the city really began to grow both economically and civically. Nearly three years later, a building boom hit Chicago and the town began to grow dramatically through the advent of contemporary conveniences of the period including the telegraph and gas works by 1850.⁹⁸

The canal was not the only transportation route through the city at this time period. The railroad transformed Chicago from a dusty dormant town into a large commercial and industrial society as the first railroad was established in 1836 by the Galena and Chicago Union railroad. At least three main railroad lines, the Michigan Central, Galena and Chicago Railroad, and the Illinois Central ran concurrently through the town bringing in both freight cars and passenger trains to Chicago. Freight not only moved by train but also through boat traffic on the Great Lakes which hauled the freight to New York and the rest of the Northeastern states. These transportation routes would be one of the main reasons for the formation of the rendezvous point for US soldiers during the American Civil War because of the ease of access to the front lines in the

⁹⁸ George Levy, *To Die in Chicago: Confederate Prisoners at Camp Douglas, 1862-65* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing, 1999), 26.

western theater. They also created a direct route for southern prisoners to be shipped out of Kentucky, Arkansas, Missouri, and Mississippi following losses in these areas.⁹⁹

Before the advent of the war, the area on which Camp Douglas resided was occupied by another fascinating and controversial American, Stephen A. Douglas. Douglas had a famed political career in both the Illinois and United States legislatures. In 1858, he opposed a not-so-well-known Abraham Lincoln for the Senate seat in Illinois. Douglas would win the election, only to go up against Lincoln again for the presidency two years later. Though Douglas and Lincoln had contrasting views politically, they grew to admire one another as each was firmly in support of a United States.

Douglas' home was in the south side of Chicago on an estate known as "Oakenwald."¹⁰⁰ Before his death on June 3, 1861, Senator Stephen A. Douglas agreed to give a portion of his 53-acre estate to a group of Chicago Baptists. This portion of the estate was used as a site for the old University of Chicago, as part of the agreement. Therefore, in 1856 the Chicago Baptists agreed to the terms and Douglas provided them with ten acres of land located "on the west side of Cottage Grove Avenue just north of 35th Street."¹⁰¹ This property would be directly across from Douglas's estate and directly adjacent to the soon-to-be erected Camp Douglas.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks, *Site of Camp Douglas* (Chicago: City of Chicago, Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks, 1976), 1.

¹⁰¹ Special Collections Research Center, *The University and the City*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993), 2-3 .

Camp Douglas as a Training Ground

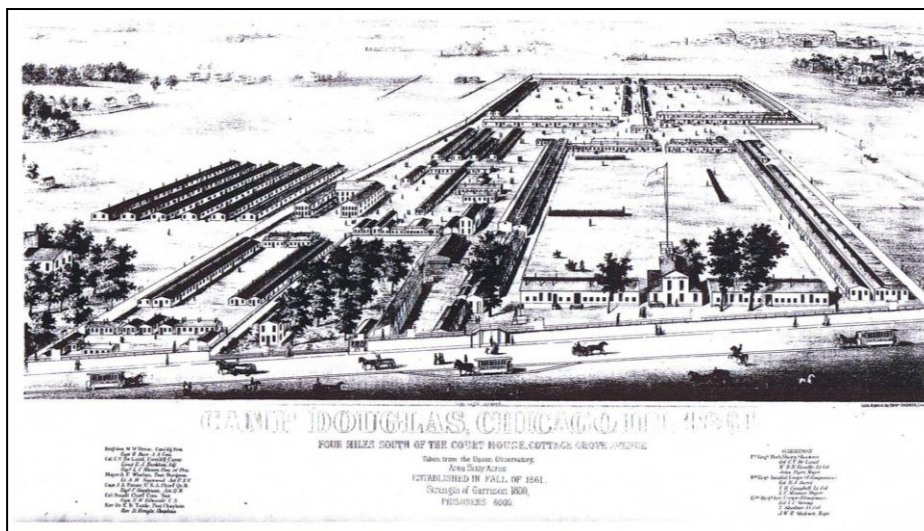


Figure 8. An early 1863 image of the layout of Camp Douglas from the south.
Source: Audio-Visual Collection, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

The problems that evolved over the history of the camp all come from the original site of the camp. On September 21,

1861 Illinois Governor Richard Yates ordered that the twenty-five northern counties would be consolidated to make a single military district, called the Northern Military District. The new camp was to be established in Chicago for the volunteer troops from those twenty-five counties to rendezvous and train.¹⁰² Problems surrounding the location of the camp began to show first with Judge Allen C. Fuller who was assigned by Governor Yates to select the site of the camp, even though Fuller would say that the location was ideal. Judge Fuller inspected an area southeast of the city along the city's border which was already being used by a local militia group who were training under James A. Mulligan.¹⁰³ Mulligan received the establishment of this regiment known as the

¹⁰² "Another Camp," *Illinois State Journal*, 23 Sept. 1861, p.3, col. 2. and "A Camp At Chicago," *Chicago Tribune*, 23 Sept. 1861, p.1, col.1.

¹⁰³ George Levy, 29

Irish Brigade after “pestering the dying Senator Douglas for a letter to the War Department.”¹⁰⁴ The regiment would become the 23rd Illinois Infantry.

This location was an ideal spot according to Fuller because it was four miles from downtown Chicago, Lake Michigan offered plenty of water, and was close camp to the Illinois Central Railroad, the longest railroad in the US.¹⁰⁵ The camp was able to transfer both Union troops and prisoners to Cairo in a matter of one or two days, thus increasing the role of Camp Douglas later in the war. However, it has been stated by author George Levy that “a more qualified person, such as an engineer, would have made a better choice of location.”¹⁰⁶ Levy states this because as the camp became inhabited, the lower areas became a cesspool of vermin and disease in swamp-like conditions. Nevertheless, the camp was to be built and Col. Joseph H. Tucker had the obligation of fulfilling that order.

“Tucker placed the camp’s main entrance at the east end, fronting on Cottage Grove. A gate in the south fence allowed access to Douglas[s] property where the University of Chicago stood¹⁰⁷. The camp used Douglas land for its small pox hospital, and about four rows of garrison barracks.... [The] Illinois Central railroad tracks ran two hundred yards east of Cottage Grove, and the camp soon had its own railway station.”¹⁰⁸

That description by Levy following the establishment gives a sense of the camp only days after the first recruits arrived at camp. Yet, it was not as enjoyable for those who

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 26 and 29.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 29.

¹⁰⁷ The University of Chicago referenced here is not the current University of Chicago. The “Old University”, fell into disrepair following Senator Douglas’s death and the financial panics of 1857 and 1873. These panics caused the financial supporters to withhold money to the newly formed university. This eventually caused the Baptist Union Theological Seminary located on the campus to move and then caused the Old University to fold upon not being able to pay the mortgage. (Special Collections Research Center, *The University and the City*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993), .3)

¹⁰⁸ Levy, 31.

were part of the construction. Throughout October and November of 1861, the construction of the garrison barracks was assigned to the Wilson's Mechanic Fusileers.¹⁰⁹ The Fusileers were a group of "carpenter apprentices and journeymen from the Mechanics Institute in Chicago."¹¹⁰ The Mechanics would later stir up trouble in camp after finding out that they would be sent to the front line to fight. They were under the impression that they were only to be used in the construction of camp as carpenters. However, as far as the state was concerned, they were enlisted as simply a regiment of infantry.¹¹¹

The original plan for the camp was designed so that the garrison barracks stretched one thousand feet along the north, south, and west side of the camp ground. These barracks were sectioned off into three areas. The first of these areas consisted of a large sleeping area, kitchen, and sink. The second area was a mess hall, with the third area used for rooms segregated for the sergeant, lieutenants, and captain. They also followed standard military barracks of the period with three tiers of wooden bunks which roughly held 180 soldiers, though there was not standards set for a centralized design plan for the entire layout of the camp, just the specific buildings like the barracks. The fourth side of the square located along Cottage Grove was used to house the regimental and staff officers. The ground in the center of the square would be used for

¹⁰⁹ Fusileer is commonly spelled fusilier. It is not known whether it is a misspelling from the troops organized under the name or a misspelling by the newspaper. "The Camp of Instruction," Chicago Tribune, 4 October 1861, p.4, col.1.

¹¹⁰ Levy, 31

¹¹¹ The Troubles in Col. Wilson's Mechanic Fusileer Regiment," Chicago Tribune, 18 December 1861, p.4, col.2.

dress parades, while another area immediately adjoining the camp would be used as a drilling ground.¹¹²

The camp would be quartered by two pathways, one running north and south and the other running east and west. The administration of the camp was located on the western portion of the east side which included the hospital, Quartermaster, Commissioner and Surgeon's quarters and probably the guard house (isolated prison). This design plan is similar to the standard Roman Castra plan, which also was bisected by two pathways and used as a military defensive position. With the necessity for water, a hydrant was placed in the northeast corner of the grounds. According to the *Chicago Tribune* this set of buildings was constructed as the Infantry Camp.¹¹³ Adjoining the Infantry Camp on its western side was a large eighty-acre plot that was large and dry. It would be constructed for the Cavalry Camp and be comprised of the same military barracks and a large drilling ground identical to the Infantry camp. The only structural difference between the two was the necessity of the Cavalry camp to also have stables for their horses. The two camps would be connected by the east and west roadway that ran through the camps.¹¹⁴ However, it was not uncommon for there to be two separate smaller camps that were part of the larger facility. Camp Butler in Springfield, IL also had a camp for both the infantry and the cavalry. This arrangement made it easier for each branch to conduct drilling within their restricted space.

¹¹² "The State Camp of Instruction: The Grounds and Progress of the Week," *Chicago Tribune*, 10 October 1861, p.4, col.1.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

The barracks constructed by Wilson's Mechanic Fusileers, as previously mentioned, were one-story single-layer board and battenn structures, one hundred-five feet long, and twenty-four feet wide. The barracks were separated into three sections and had no plaster covering the nine-foot interior walls.¹¹⁵ These barracks were constructed in an inexpensive manner so as not to cause the State of Illinois and its tax payers a large debt.¹¹⁶ They are also stated as being "challenging in comparison in point of durability, comfort, and cheapness with any others in this country."¹¹⁷

With this set up, the camp ground took on various names. Since the camp was segregated by branch, the two areas took different names. The eastern division, which comprised the officer quarters, post office, post headquarters, and a parade ground, was known as "Garrison Square." Attached to the area south of "Garrison Square" was the home of Henry Graves. To the south of the Graves home was the area known as "White Oak Square," which held the White Oaks dungeon or the camp prison.¹¹⁸

It was thought that once the camp was completely constructed it would be able to hold at least five to six thousand Union recruits by November. On October 24, 1861, with the completion of the flag pole which stood proudly at one hundred feet tall and located just outside of the officers quarters, the flag presentation took place, before

¹¹⁵ Levy, 31.

¹¹⁶ "The State Camp of Instruction: Its Condition, Objects, and Utility," Chicago Tribune, 11 November 1861, p.4, col.4.

¹¹⁷ "The State Camp of Instruction," Chicago Tribune, 16 November 1861, p.4, col.2.

¹¹⁸ Levy, 31.

officially opening in early November.¹¹⁹ The flag that was presented that day would weather the time and harsh trials for the next four years before the camp was dismantled in late 1865.

Only three months after being officially opened, sickness was running unmanaged through the camp. Measles had made an outbreak and affected over one hundred Union soldiers. The sheer number of troops caused the camp hospital to be over crowded and taxed in material. This caused the camp to make use of the City Hospital and its staff.¹²⁰ This instance brings two future problems to the forefront which would haunt the camp later. The first was the need for more hospital space and the second was the necessity for ventilation in the barracks. The barracks had little ventilation and the sheer numbers inside each barrack caused the spread of the disease to escalate.

With so many men in the camp coming from religious backgrounds, the regimental chaplain was left to inquire about readings and hymns for the services held in the respective barracks. However, by December 14, 1861, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) had already begun proposing the erection of a chapel within the

¹¹⁹ "Flag Raising at Camp Dougals, " Chicago Tribune, 24 October 1861, p.4, col. 1.

¹²⁰ "Sickness at Camp Douglas," Chicago Tribune, 2 December 1861, p.4, col.2.

confines of Camp Douglas.¹²¹ The Chapel would be completed by the YMCA, February 5, 1862.¹²²

Only two weeks after the celebration of the new Chapel, the camp would change its scope of operation from a training facility to a camp of internment for seven thousand Confederate soldiers. It is stated by the *Chicago Tribune* that once the garrisoned Union soldiers were removed to the front lines, their places would be occupied by the seven thousand prisoners of war escorted from Fort Donelson in Tennessee.¹²³

Prisoners take up Occupation at Camp Douglas

As the scope of the facility changed, so did the government which ran the camp. Once the prisoners were brought to Chicago via the Illinois Central Railroad,¹²⁴ the State of Illinois no longer controlled the site. It was now managed by the Federal government. At first, the prisoners of the camp were treated just as the former Union recruits were treated in the food they ate and the barracks that they slept in. It was not until February 23, 1862 that the Federal troops left White Oaks Square¹²⁵ (area later known as prisoner's square). The treatment of the prisoners was fairly well handled through the first years of occupation at the site.

¹²¹ "Young Men's Christian Association- War Meeting at the Baptist Church," *Chicago Tribune*, 14 December 1861, p.4, col.1.

¹²² "The Soldiers Festival," *Chicago Tribune*, 5 February 1862, p.4, col.1

¹²³ "7,000 Confederates Coming to Chicago," *Chicago Tribune*, 19 February 1862, p.4, col.2.

¹²⁴ "Arrival of the Rebel Prisoners, " *Chicago Tribune*, 21 February 1862, p.4, col.1.

¹²⁵ Levy, 41.

One of the large structural problems with the camp upon the prisoners' arrival at camp was the lack of a fence around the barracks. While being occupied by the Union recruits there was no need for a fence as they could come and go freely. Though there was a gate at the entrance of the camp, there was no space barrier between the wide open city of Chicago and the prisoners. However, upon the rebels' arrival at camp a large outcry by the Mayor of Chicago, Julian S. Rumsey, about the lack of fencing caused the camp to construct a stockade wall by March 7, 1862.¹²⁶ Up until this time, the City of Chicago's police force and a group of fifty able-bodied men were patrolling the perimeter of the camp. Once the wall was constructed, it surrounded the home of Henry Graves who had a portion of his property commandeered by the federal government for the camp. The Graves property caused the "U-shaped deviation in the rectangular stockade."¹²⁷

Once again, disease began to take over the prison. Though the space was adequate for the nearly seven thousand prisoners housed in camp following the fall of Fort Donelson, the camp hospital was inadequate for the amount of infection that had taken over the camp. The contributing factor to the rampant infection was the lack of sufficient clothing worn by the rebels (clothing was sufficient for warmer southern climates and not for the harsh northern winters) and the weather along the way. Upon

¹²⁶ CW. Series II- Volume III, Union Correspondence, Orders, ETC., Relating To Prisoners of War and State From February 19, 1861, to June 12, 1862.#12 and 14, 24 February 1862 and 7 March 1862.

¹²⁷ Joseph L. Eisendrath Jr, "Chicago's Camp Douglas, 1861-1865," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 55 (Spring 1960):39.

arriving in camp, the prisoners huddled together in what once was the drilling ground as the Chicago snow fell on their scantily clad bodies.

The camp began to make improvements by March 1, 1862. There had already been a call made to drain the wet areas of the camp through a series of trenches and ditches as well as the construction and strengthening of the palisade walls around camp. As part of the latter improvement, a sentry walk was to be added to the palisade.¹²⁸ The sentry walk would take the appearance of similar camps in the state, which called for the walkway to be four feet below the top of the wall. Another improvement for the rebel prisoners was the rehabilitation of a horse stable/barn with bunks and cots in what once was meant to be the Cavalry Camp.¹²⁹ The sick rebel prisoners were also being housed in the Chapel constructed by the YMCA, which was an annoyance to the YMCA members as it was a place of worship and should not be used as a hospital or barrack.¹³⁰ The Chapel would be restored to its original use only days after the letter of opposition reached the camp from the YMCA. The stable on the other hand needed a tremendous amount of work to make it habitable for the prisoners. At the time, the board roof of the stables leaked water when it rained and the walls were falling inward. It was decided to use the stables in the lower portion of camp and waterproof the board roofs on these stables and in doing so, move the fence “to lessen the extent of the camp

¹²⁸ “Camp Douglas and the Prisoners,” Chicago Tribune, 1 March 1862, p.4, col.3.

¹²⁹ “Sanitary Condition of Camp Douglas,” Chicago Tribune, 5 March 1862, p.4, col.1.

¹³⁰ CW. Series II-Volume III, #14, 7 March 1862.

and at the same time much improve the condition of the fence.”¹³¹ It was also proposed under this plan to use prison labor to reduce the cost associated with the transition of space.

The drainage around camp was not much better following the construction of trenches and ditches to alleviate the water around camp. The pooling of water and the wet conditions that continued throughout March forced both Union and rebel troops to stay within their barracks most of the time. Because of these conditions and the fact

that disease was still running rampant through camp, there was great concern for the increased number of sick and dying prisoners. By March 21, 1862, the total number of dead prisoners was 97 in only a month's time¹³² and the number entering camp continued to increase with the addition of fifteen

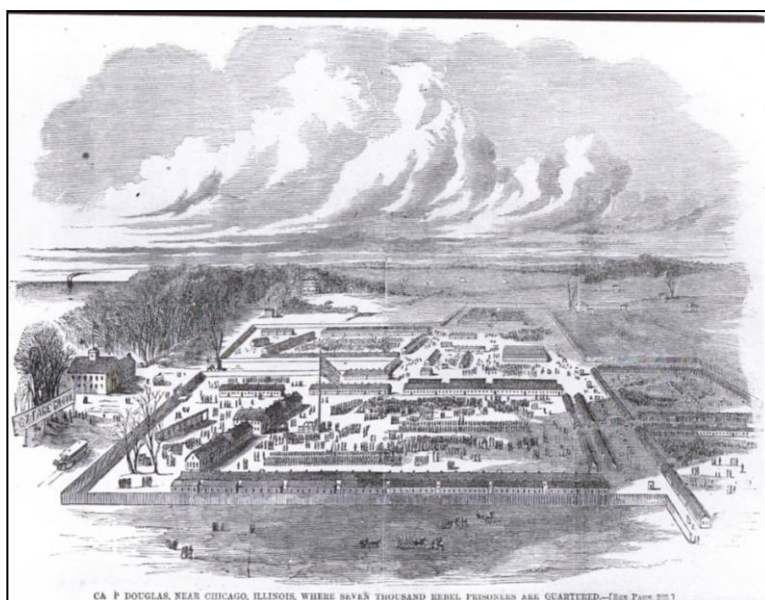


Figure 9. Image of the camp after it began to expand to the west. Notice the barracks are still organized into squares which would change later in the war. Source: "Camp Douglas," *Harpers Ferry Weekly*, 5 April 1862. Civil War –Camps and Forts, Audio-Visual Collection, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

¹³¹ CW. Series II-Volume IV, Union Correspondence, Orders, Etc., Relating to Prisoners Of War and State From June 13, 1862, to November 30, 1862, #7, 9 July 1862.

¹³² "Camp Douglas Affairs," *Chicago Tribune*, 21 March 1862, p.4, col.2. and "Camp Douglas Matters," *Chicago Tribune*, 24 March 1862, p.4, col.3.

hundred more prisoners captured at Island No. 10 on the Mississippi River.¹³³

As previously mentioned, the area known as White Oaks was used for its dungeon and isolation of large parties. The dungeon of the White Oaks area consisted of a cross plan that went twenty-five feet off the center junction. The first floor of the building was entirely deficient of any windows, doors or other opening. The only sight to be seen was the detail of the white oak lumber of which it was constructed. The second floor was also constructed of white oak and was home to the guards. The prisoners were dropped into the cells from the second floor via a hatch in the first floor ceiling and a ladder.¹³⁴ This simple wooden structure caused fear in the hearts of the Camp Douglas prisoners.

While the dungeon brought fear to the hearts of the prisoners and Union troops sent there, the camp brought excitement to the city. By early 1862, the camp had been shut off from the rest of society. Therefore, development outside the walls of the camp began in the shape of towers around the perimeter. The first tower constructed was square and fifty to sixty feet high. It was located just a few feet south of the hotel which sprang up following the establishment of the camp. The tower would allow the general

¹³³ "Camp Douglas Matters: The Prisoners from Island No. 10," Chicago Tribune, 10 April 1862, p.4, col.2.

¹³⁴ "Camp Douglas," Chicago Tribune, 30 April 1862, p.4, col.2.

paying citizens of Chicago to see the entire interior of the camp.¹³⁵ The tower would be called the “Observatory” and was patriotically painted red, white, and blue.¹³⁶

Just as the outside of the camp blossomed with development, the interior began to unravel by July, 1862. In late July, the first destructive measures were taken by the prisoners being detained. On the night of July 23, 1862, a daring escape attempt took place with the help of secessionist citizens of Chicago. With a limited number of guards present following orders to move to the front lines, the prisoners partially destroyed the west fence with the help of citizens of the city. Using ladders made from wooden bunks, many of the prisoners were able to scale the fence.¹³⁷ The built environment then began to change due to the destruction of the prisoners’ barracks, by the prisoners themselves. The exchange of prisoners could not come soon enough for the camp. It was not until September 9, 1862 that the final prisoners would leave the camp in the war’s first exchange of prisoners.¹³⁸ Though the prisoners were no longer occupying the site in mass, the camp returned to its training roots.

As part of this shift to a training facility, at least temporarily, the barracks that were occupied by the rebels were renovated by the three-month soldiers currently inhabiting the camp. Part of the renovation of the barracks consisted of dismantling the current bunks and replacing them. By reports the barracks and the bunks were in such disarray that one soldier wondered how any man brought such misery on one’s self.

¹³⁵ “Camp Douglas,” Chicago Tribune, 13 May 1862, p.4, col.2.

¹³⁶ “The Observatory,” Chicago Tribune, 17 May 1862, p.4, col.4.

¹³⁷ “Camp Douglas Disturbance,” Chicago Tribune, 25 July 1862, p.4, col.4.

¹³⁸ “The Exodus of Prisoners,” Chicago Tribune, 9 September 1862, p.4, col.1.

Once the bunks were reconstructed the walls of the barracks were also whitewashed and cleaned. The renovated bunks were said to have taken on the resemblance of new barracks.¹³⁹ However, the actual work may not have been that great because by October a report in the *Chicago Tribune* stated that the renovation was done in a hurry and was still not fit for a respectable man.¹⁴⁰

After the renovation of the camp grounds and the barracks, some paroled Union prisoners sent to Camp Douglas to wait out their parole period began to wreak havoc on the structures throughout camp. On May 29, 1862, the paroled prisoners from Harpers Ferry entirely demolished two sutler stands within the camp.¹⁴¹ It was also stated that on several occasions these paroled prisoners smashed through the stockade fence to reach the outside. Since the parolees had served on the front lines, they were familiar with violence and death. By contrast, the guards had no combat experience and had only dealt with unarmed rebels. The reasoning given for the destruction of the site was that they were Union soldiers being treated like prisoners once again.¹⁴²

Still the destruction continued to take place throughout October 1862 by the paroled prisoners. The first instance to report was caused by a fire in one of the barracks which was extinguished by the fire department. However, this fire caused two barracks

¹³⁹ "At Camp Douglas," *Chicago Tribune*, 22 September 1862, p.4, col. 3.

¹⁴⁰ It is hard to say that the neatness of the barracks was never taken care of because over time, especially with the occupation by the paroled prisoners that these barracks probably needed to be cleansed again.

¹⁴¹ "Trouble at Camp Douglas," *Chicago Tribune*, 30 September 1862, p.4, col.1.

¹⁴² "Troubles at Camp Douglas," *Chicago Tribune*, 1 October 1862, p.4, col.1-2.

to be entirely destroyed.¹⁴³ The second instance of destruction of the camp comes only ten days later through the use of fire on several of the barracks. It was reported that the fire destroyed some “600 or 700 superficial feet of the barracks at Camp Douglas. About one-half the length of barracks facing the parade ground on the west, and about one-third facing on the north, have thus been destroyed.”¹⁴⁴ Yet, this would not be the last of the problems caused by the paroled troops at Camp Douglas. Though “barrack burning [had] ceased, and in its place, fence burning and fence smashing seems to be the order of the day and night.”¹⁴⁵ No matter who was in charge, they continued to wreck the environment around them. It was also reported that they would no longer burn the barracks since the federal government would no longer replace the ones they burned.¹⁴⁶ They were finally ordered back to the field of service on November 20, 1862.¹⁴⁷

Following the departure of the paroled New Yorkers, the Quartermaster decided that the barracks that were burned would be rebuilt. He stated that the barracks would be “left in as good or better condition than they were when the paroled prisoners entered.”¹⁴⁸ He also stated that the “soldiers that are detailed upon this work as carpenters, receive 40 cents per day extra pay.”¹⁴⁹ With all the construction underway, the Quartermaster expected the condition of the barracks to be improving for the

¹⁴³ “Fire at Camp Douglas,” Chicago Tribune, 11 October 1862, p.4, col.1.

¹⁴⁴ “Camp Douglas,” Chicago Tribune, 21 October 1862, p.4, col.1.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ “Camp Douglas,” Chicago Tribune, 15 November 1862, p.4, col.1.

¹⁴⁷ Affairs at Camp Douglas,” Chicago Tribune, 20 November 1862, p.4, col.1.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

troops. However, fire struck again in the barracks of the remaining New York regiment causing further damage to the barracks that would need to be rebuilt upon their departure.¹⁵⁰ It was estimated that the amount of damage caused by the paroled troops was around \$7,652.70.¹⁵¹

Even with all the destruction that took place by the Union veterans, the rebel troops were coming to take their place once again. On January 24, 1863, the camp received orders that it would be receiving another round of rebel prisoners from Arkansas. The neighborhood surrounding the camp began protesting the arrival of the prisoners and burned two rows of barracks. It was their plan to set fire in the corner from which the wind was blowing in order to strike the rest of the barracks as well. However, the soldiers within the camp stopped the spread of the flames “by tearing down a small portion of the buildings.”¹⁵²

As part of the rebuilding campaign that began in October, more than \$15,000 was spent fixing the barracks and the fence. It was estimated that the paroled prisoners destroyed

“more than a mile of fence at one time; and that upwards of 500,000 feet of lumber has been used ... in rebuilding and repairing that barracks and fence since the first of October.”¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ “Another Fire at Camp Douglas,” Chicago Tribune, 21 November 1862, p.4, col.1.

¹⁵¹ CW. Series II-Volume V, Union Correspondence, Orders, Etc., Relating to Prisoners Of War and State From December 1, 1862, to June 10, 1863, #9, 26 January 1863.

¹⁵² “Fires,” Chicago Tribune, 26 January 1863, p.4, col.1.

¹⁵³ “Arrival of Rebel Prisoners,” Chicago Tribune, 28 January 1863, p.4, col.3.

Another project slated for construction was a prison to be built inside the prisoner's square. The new prison, nearly completed by early February, measured thirty feet by fifty feet. Other construction projects that took place during the early portion of 1863 consisted of reusing the chapel as a hospital and the establishment of a pest house from a stable once used by the cavalry.¹⁵⁴ At the same time, a small pox hospital was being constructed outside of camp as its necessity began to rise following the admittance of more rebel prisoners in February 1863. The new pest house was located nearly four hundred yards outside of the south gate.¹⁵⁵ Still the need arose for more hospital space to deal with the growing epidemic, though the space really was not needed in retrospect because only a month later many of them would be shipped back off to Virginia in another prisoner exchange.¹⁵⁶ The rest of the prisoners would be shipped out to Virginia around May 15, 1863.¹⁵⁷ Following the departure, a long lull set in around Camp Douglas because the next round of prisoners would not arrive until August from Camp Chase in Ohio.¹⁵⁸ Over five hundred and fifty of those men were from Morgan's raid into Ohio.¹⁵⁹ This group of men caused nothing but trouble until their release early in 1865.

By September 1863, mass improvements were made to the grounds of camp though there was speculation that the camp would be moved to Rockford, IL or Des

¹⁵⁴ "The Rebels at Camp Douglas," *Chicago Tribune*, 3 February 1863, p.4.

¹⁵⁵ "A Visit to Camp Douglas Pest House," *Chicago Tribune*, 25 February, p.4, col.4.

¹⁵⁶ "Rebel Prisoners off to Dixie," *Chicago Tribune*, 31 March 1863, p.4, col.2.

¹⁵⁷ "Camp Douglas Matters," *Chicago Tribune*, 15 May 1863, p.4, col.1.

¹⁵⁸ "Rebels Coming to Chicago," *Chicago Tribune*, 18 August 1863, p.4, col.3.

¹⁵⁹ "Camp Douglas Matters," *Chicago Tribune*, 19 August 1863, p.4, col.4.

Plaines, IL. The talk of moving the camp was nothing new and had been under constant discussion through most of 1862-3. For the most part, the complaints about the camp were the swampy wet ground inside the walls. This is nothing new in this area of the country where the constant freeze-thaw cycle creates muddy conditions in most fielded areas and the spring season brings a phenomenal amount of rain to the region. The other problem was the need for more sink space in the camp grounds, as there were too many men for the amount of sink, or latrine, space at the time. Compounding the sink issue, were the muddy conditions caused by wet weather. This was handled by the commanding officer of the camp by using lime to combat both disease and smell from the sinks that were causing the muddy disease-ridden ground areas.¹⁶⁰ However, as part of the improvements a massive sewer and water system was being laid through the camp and was finally connected to Lake Michigan. The plan for the sewer system was long awaited since its initial conception in July 1862 and when it finally arrived it was much to the surprise of the Chicago Observatory and the University, who both wanted the camp moved.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ CW. Series II-Volume IV, Union Correspondence, Orders, Etc., Relating to Prisoners Of War and State From June 13, 1862, to November 30, 1862, #7, 9 July 1862.

¹⁶¹ "Camp Douglas Matters," Chicago Tribune, 5 October 1863, p.4, col.3.

	Feet, B. M.
1. A sewer 2,600 feet long, 8 inches wide at the bottom, 2 feet wide at the top, and 2 ½ feet high:	
Bottom plank, 2 inches by 12 inches, any length	5,200
Side plank, 2 inches thick, 16 feet long	28,000
Top plank, 2 inches thick, 14 feet long	12,500
Inner bottom board, 1 inch by 8 inches wide	1,800
Battens for sides, 1 inch by 6 inches, 16 feet long	7,000
Battens for top, 1 inch by 6 inches, 14 feet long	3,300
Rib-bands at upper corners, 2 inches by 4 inches	3,500
2. A sewer 650 feet long, 8 inches wide at bottom, 18 inches at top, 20 inches high:	
Bottom plank, 2 inches by 12 inches	1,300
Sides and top, 2-inch plank, any length and width	7,800
inner bottom board, 1 inch by 8 inches	450
Battens, 1 inch by 6 inches	2,000
Rib-bands, 2 inches by 4 inches	900
Braces, across the top (both sewers)	900
3. Box drain, 10 inches by 12 inches inside, 1,000 feet long:	
Sides and top, 2 inches by 14 inches	7,000
Bottom, 2 inches by 10 inches	1,000
4. Five man-holes for access to sewer in deep excavation:	
Plank, 2-inch, 16 feet long	1,000
Uprights for corners, 2 inches by 4 inches, 16 feet	125
5. Four catch basins, for admitting surface drainage:	
Plank, 2-inch, 16 feet long	1,000
Corners, 2 inches by 4 inches, 16 feet long	125
6. Ten privies, each 16 by 30, with water-tight soil box:	
Planks for soil boxes, 2-inch, 16 feet long	4,000
Sills, 6 inches by 6 inches, 16 feet long	3,360
Joists, 2 inches by 10 inches, 16 feet long	1,120
Common boards, 1-inch	25,000
Studding, 2 inches by 4 inches	3,000
	118,380
118,380 feet of lumber, at \$11, delivered	\$1,302.18
5,000 pounds of nails and spikes, at 40 cents	200.00
If the deep excavation from the lake to the camp fence is done by contract instead of prison labor it will cost as follows:	
1,200 cubic yards, 14 to 19 feet deep, quicksand bottom, and replacing same at 50 cents	1,200.00
	2,702.18
The sides of the trench must be lined with 2-inch plank, braced across during the progress of the work to prevent caving in.	
Water supply:	
2,060 feet of 3-inch cast-iron pipe laid, the trenching to be done by prisoners, at 50 cents	1,030.00
800 feet of 2-inch lead pipe, at 40 cents	320.00
Taking up and resetting 8 of the present hydrants with box leading to sewer, at \$5	40.00
Pipe and cocks and plumbing for supplying the soil boxes of the privies with water and for flushing them out, 10 privies, at \$4	40.00
Three tanks, of 500 gallons, for flushing out the sewers, with sewer connections	75.00
Water connections of same, at \$5 each	15.00
	4,222.18
In the above estimate all earth-work inside the camp is supposed to be done by prison labor. It is quite probable that part, perhaps most, of the carpenter's work will have to be done either by mechanics hired by the day or by contract.	
The sewer, 3,250 feet long, could probably be laid mostly by prisoners, except the part outside the camp, with proper superintend-once.	
Laying the sewer outside the camp in the deep trench, 850 feet, at 10 cents.	85.00
Other carpentry and skilled labor within the camp, say	\$200.00
Engineering	250.00
	4,757.18
The board of public works of the city of Chicago, having in charge the city water works which at present supply the camp, state that the present street main, from which the supply is drawn, is not large enough for the proposed extension within the camp, and that it would be necessary to replace it by a large main, costing, as they estimate	3,500.00
Total cost, allowing for contract work outside the camp, and prison labor within	8,257.18

Figure 10. Estimate for the sewer system to be put in Camp Douglas in 1862. The sewer would take until the end of 1863 before it was finished. Source: CW. Series II-Volume IV, Union Correspondence, Orders, Etc., Relating to Prisoners Of War and State From June 13, 1862, to November 30, 1862, #12, 24 July 1862.

The sewer system would be constructed of two sewers, one 2,600 feet long and the second 650 feet long.¹⁶² Specific details on the sewer line can be found in figure 10. From July of 1862 through early 1863 the water and sewer lines were being laid. At the same time, it was decided that a new and improved fence would be constructed. The new fence would be "thirteen feet high, with a walk or "guard-walk" on the top, two and half feet wide, with sentry houses at proper distances apart."¹⁶³

On November 12, 1863

¹⁶² CW. Series II-Volume IV, Union Correspondence, Orders, Etc., Relating to Prisoners Of War and State From June 13, 1862, to November 30, 1862, #12, 24 July 1862.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

a large fire consumed over six-hundred feet of barracks and a thousand feet of new fence. The fire originally started from a stove pipe in the officer barracks. The flames combined with a strong west wind contributed to the destruction of \$3,500 worth of buildings in the northeast corner of the enclosure.¹⁶⁴ Only a day after the fire destroyed the fence, it had already been replaced along with the rebuilding of the barracks that were also destroyed.¹⁶⁵ Since the new fence was still being constructed at the time it burned, it received special attention.

Other construction projects were also taking place at the camp at the time of the fire. With the erection of the fence a new guard house was also being erected at the gate. This guard house would be divided into three rooms and be ninety feet by sixteen feet which included "six windows and two more doors."¹⁶⁶ The first room would consist of a reception room for those visiting the camp. The second room would be for the lieutenant, while the third room would be situated for the officer of the day. After the fire destroyed the barracks, carpenters were set to begin work on reconstructing them as soon as materials were collected.¹⁶⁷ The new barracks would be completely constructed by December 9, 1863. Through the destruction of fire, Captain Goodman who had been in charge of reconstructing the destroyed portions of camp and the

¹⁶⁴ "A Conflagration at Camp Douglas," Chicago Tribune, 12 November 1863, p.4, col.1.

¹⁶⁵ "Camp Douglas Matters," Chicago Tribune, 13 November 1863, p.4, col.1.

¹⁶⁶ Levy, 281.

¹⁶⁷ "Military Matters," Chicago Tribune, 19 November 1863, p.4, col.1.

investment in the sewer and water lines spent roughly \$50,000 for those improvements.¹⁶⁸

Even with those improvements, the camp was still expanding through more new construction. Two new hospitals were also being constructed at the end of December along with another row of barracks replacing those which burned in the large fire in November.

“They will be constructed upon the most approved plan—each 100 feet long by 30 feet wide, two twelve feet stories high, well lighted with large windows, and surrounded by a verandah for protection from the sun in the summer. Near every bunk is a flue ventilator extending to the roof, fresh air being admitted from outside into the centre [sic] of the room by flues, and an air chamber beneath the floor. The whole building will be heated by furnaces in the cook-room adjoining—each of the rooms are 30 by 30, where all the cooking and washing will be done.”¹⁶⁹

Consequently, the dimensions of the building are in question following a January 25 report that states the hospitals were one hundred and forty feet long by twenty-eight feet wide with thirteen and a half feet tall ceilings.¹⁷⁰ However, it is noted that the hospital was located in the middle of the camp and surrounded by a high board fence with a guard walk near the top of it.¹⁷¹

With the addition of the hospitals, several other improvements began to take place in order to best fit the officer’s business arrangements. It was felt to be necessary that “two of the four buildings at the west side of the parade ground [were] to be

¹⁶⁸ “Affairs at Camp Douglas,” Chicago Tribune, 6 December 1863, p.4, col.2.

¹⁶⁹ “New Hospitals,” Chicago Tribune, 18 December 1863, p.4, col.3.

¹⁷⁰ “New Hospital Buildings,” Chicago Tribune, 25 January 1864, p.4, col.2.

¹⁷¹ “Camp Douglas,” Chicago Tribune, 15 April 1864, p.4, col.1.

moved to the southeast corner near the headquarters.”¹⁷² It was also necessary at this point to finally close the gap between the federal troop grounds and the rebel prisoners. It was also noted that a new thirteen-foot high board fence would be installed to keep the two encampments separated.¹⁷³

Probably the biggest improvement undertaken at the camp was the raising of the barracks off of the ground by four feet. The change took place in prisoner’s square where the barracks were

“cut into two, raised four feet from the ground and arranged into streets. They now [stood] four abreast and nine in depth, to accommodate six thousand more, making a total of twelve thousand, when the new barracks [were] completed.”¹⁷⁴

This new design idea also called for each barrack to be aligned on streets that were fifty feet wide, with an “alley twenty-five feet wide between the ends.”¹⁷⁵ It was also reported that

the prisoner’s square could accommodate another thirty-nine barracks which were

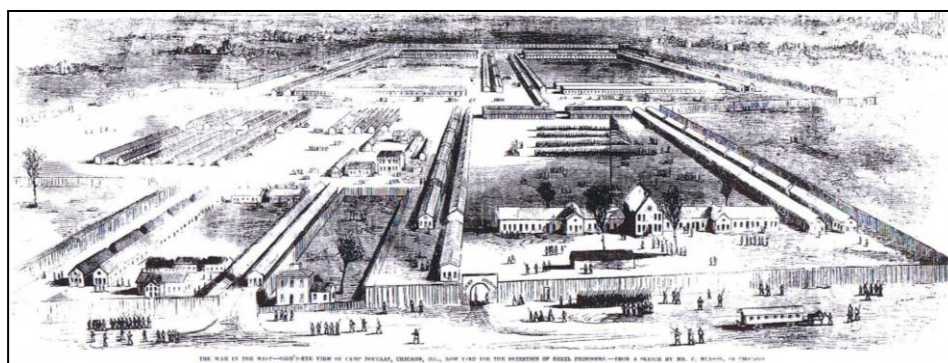


Figure 11. A later drawing of Camp Douglas which shows the development of the barracks as being organized into rows. Source: Audio-Visual Collection, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

¹⁷² “Camp Douglas,” *Chicago Tribune*, 6 March 1864, p.4, col.2.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ “Changes at Camp Douglas,” *Chicago Tribune*, 14 June 1864, p.4, col.1.

¹⁷⁵ CW. Series II-Volume VII, *Union and Confederate Correspondence, Orders, Etc., Relating to Prisoners Of War and State From April 1, 1864, to December 31, 1864, #8, 1 June 1864.*

ninety feet by twenty-four feet on top of the thirty-one barracks, ninety feet by twenty-four feet, and one barracks which was seventy feet by twenty-four feet. The additional barracks would allow the camp to accommodate 11,800 prisoners.¹⁷⁶ Only five days later a telegram was set to Col. Hoffman asking how many of the garrison soldiers would be leaving to ascertain whether the remaining barracks could be moved to the area known as prisoner's square or the old cavalry camp.¹⁷⁷ Since the movement of the barracks from the garrison square to the prisoner's square was a cheaper proposition, Col. Hoffman decided to go that route. It was also stated that if this movement of barracks would not cover additional prisoners taken in, that the commanding officer should build new barracks as cheaply as possible.¹⁷⁸ Once the prison had taken its final shape, the grounds consisted of fifteen rows of four barracks, each with a vestibule "inside the outer door, six feet in length by four feet in width...to conserve heat."¹⁷⁹ Once lined up, the barracks were numbered one to sixty.¹⁸⁰

Throughout mid to late 1864, much was done in the way of exchanging prisoners and receiving new prisoners from the heart of the Confederacy. The prisoners set for exchange were from the hospitals as they were convalescents. However, for the nearly eight hundred that were exchanged, General Sherman sent another three thousand

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ CW. Series II-Volume VII, Union and Confederate Correspondence, Orders, Etc., Relating to Prisoners Of War and State From April 1, 1864, to December 31, 1864, #9, 6 June 1864

¹⁷⁸ CW. Series II-Volume VII, Union and Confederate Correspondence, Orders, Etc., Relating to Prisoners Of War and State From April 1, 1864, to December 31, 1864, #20, 25 June 1864.

¹⁷⁹ Levy, 281

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 284

back north to Chicago following his raids through Georgia, especially Atlanta in November of 1864.

These new prisoners would have the chance to better their new environment by helping in the construction of the new sewer lines that ran through the camp. At the same time the sewer lines were being laid throughout the camp, more emphasis was placed in detaining the prisoners inside the walls. The fence was strengthened through the addition of closely nailed boards on the interior portion of the high board fence.¹⁸¹ During the construction of the water and sewer lines, a focus was put on retrofitting the barracks with windows and new ridge ventilators.¹⁸² It seems as though many of the windows were either inoperable or neglected to be put in at the time of construction. This seems to be the only real problem in the “temporary” barracks formerly used as stables.

It would only be another six days before the plan for the reconstruction of the moved barracks and the erection of the new barracks in the prisoner’s square was to be started along with its reorganization. The new plan was to continue the move but alter their erection. The commander recommended that the barracks only be raised off the ground “enough” to be thoroughly policed, while using lath on the underside of boards to allow dirt to fill the cracks and save expenses. He also devised that in the winter the

¹⁸¹ “Camp Douglas,” Chicago Tribune, 11 December 1864, p.4, col.2.

¹⁸² CW. Series II-Volume VII, Union and Confederate Correspondence, Orders, Etc., Relating to Prisoners Of War and State From April 1, 1864, to December 31, 1864, #33, 11 September 1864.

cracks in the floor would be filled with clay plaster allowing the rooms to stay warmer and cutting the amount of fuel used in the boilers.¹⁸³

Construction of barracks, outbuildings, and necessary repairs to the old barracks continued throughout 1864. It was during late October that a new wash house was constructed with six new boilers to be used by the prisoners. At the same time, prison laborers were working on laying a six-inch water line in place of the three-inch line which was originally laid.¹⁸⁴ During the constant shuffling of construction jobs camp also ended up with a new coal house on the east side of prisoner's square. The new coal house would measure twenty-five feet wide by fifty feet long.¹⁸⁵

In late 1864, a request by the neighborhood surrounding the camp called for the moving of the pest house away from their property. This request was acted upon by the camp as the camp started the construction of a new pest house in a location farther from camp in the area known as Dull Grove. However, on February 5, 1865 someone set the new pest house on fire with an incendiary device. The fire was spotted quickly and the flames extinguished before any serious damage could be reported on the building. It is believed that it was the members of the neighborhood who had threatened to burn it down prior to the date, who actually took part in it burning.

¹⁸³ CW. Series II-Volume VII, Union and Confederate Correspondence, Orders, Etc., Relating to Prisoners Of War and State From April 1, 1864, to December 31, 1864, #34, 17 September 1864.

¹⁸⁴ CW. Series II-Volume VII, Union and Confederate Correspondence, Orders, Etc., Relating to Prisoners Of War and State From April 1, 1864, to December 31, 1864, #42, 23 October 1864.

¹⁸⁵ Levy, 296.

As the war was winding down, the camp was still growing through the erection of more buildings and structures. This was in part because of the completion of another

Table 1	
<u>Descriptions of Buildings at the Close of War[1]</u>	
Buildings	Numbers/Dimensions
Headquarters	1/80x40
Officers Quarters	66 room
Offices	14/12x12s
Garrison Barracks with kitchens	40/85x24
General hospital, 4 wins	1/100x80
Post Hospital	1/28x204
Prison hospital, 2 wings each	1/100x28
Smallpox hospital, 2 wings each	1/204/40
Quartermaster warehouse	1/60x100
Commissary warehouse	1/40x100
Ordinance warehouse	1/20x60
Prison barracks, Prisoner's Square	64/24x90
Garrison guardhouse	1/20x40
Wash house	1/24x66
Guard House and court martial hall	1/24x50
Post church	1/30x75
Water pipes	3,600
Sewerage	5,000

Table A. Table can be found in Levy's book *To Die in Chicago*. The actual information was received from the Illinois State Archives.

general hospital and the erection of a commodious chapel and reading room which was funded through concerts performed by the camp band.¹⁸⁶ The band had performed both in the camp and at outside venues in the city. By the time the chapel and reading room were erected, the mass majority of people were no longer in camp. On February 18, 1865 parole rolls were taken for all prisoners who wanted to be

exchanged, but only totaled one thousand five hundred.¹⁸⁷ Yet, the camp commanders were confused when nearly two hundred went to the front lines and returned back to Camp Douglas after hearing how the Confederacy was falling into disrepair. These

¹⁸⁶ "Camp Douglas," Chicago Tribune, 11 February 1865, p.4, col.1.

¹⁸⁷ "Camp Douglas- Exchanges," Chicago Tribune, 18 February 1865, p.4, col.1.

prisoners were then reenlisted back into camp. But by March 1865, the total number of prisoners had dropped to only seven thousand five hundred still in camp.¹⁸⁸

Following the defeat of General Lee outside of Richmond in April 1865, the rebel prisoners were allowed to enter downtown Chicago where they purchased Union Flags with which to decorate their quarters.¹⁸⁹ Following the celebration within camp, rolls were taken with regard to the oath of allegiance. It was expected that all seven thousand prisoners still in camp would take the oath.¹⁹⁰ Nearly one thousand men willingly took the oath and were quickly transported back to their homes. It was reported that holding the prisoners in the camp following the end of the war was costing the United States government about \$5,000 per day.¹⁹¹ There would only be sixty prisoners left in camp by June 27, 1865 and those prisoners were being held in the hospitals until they were well.¹⁹² Even then, the prisoners were issued "transportation to the nearest point to their old homes and on arriving they are left to look out for themselves."¹⁹³ At the same time the rebel prisoners awaited their return home, Camp Douglas was being used to muster regiments out of service. After being paid, the troops were issued a train ticket back to their homes throughout the region. Just as the men

¹⁸⁸ "Prisoners for Exchange," Chicago Tribune, 25 March 1865, p.4, col.1.

¹⁸⁹ "A Straw," Chicago Tribune, 15 April 1865, p.4, col.1.

¹⁹⁰ "Camp Douglas," Chicago Tribune, 30 April 1865, p.4, col.1.

¹⁹¹ "The Rebels at Camp Douglas," Chicago Tribune, 4 June 1865, p.4, col.1.

¹⁹² "Camp Douglas," Chicago Tribune, 27 June 1865, p.4, col.1.

¹⁹³ "Camp Douglas," Chicago Tribune, 10 July 1865, p.4, col.1.

were shipped back to their respective homes, their former homes within the camp were being torn down or sold.¹⁹⁴

A small portion of the barracks would remain open while the mustering out of soldiers continued. The end was near for the camp as it was completely decommissioned on September 7, 1865.¹⁹⁵ In the weeks following the decommission, the camp was torn down and sold in pieces at public auction, thus ending the Camp Douglas' tenure as a rendezvous point and prison camp containing Confederate prisoners. The final building was sold on December 24, 1865.¹⁹⁶ It can be argued that since many of the former prisoners had no real home to go back to many of them stayed in the developing city of Chicago.

Development Around and Over the Site

Following the removal of the final building of the camp, the development around the camp began to take off. Chicago was a boom town just prior to the war and it would continue following the war. It is thought that the camp was removed and torn down because it was in the way of the commercial and residential development. The original development following the war consisted of a lavish residential district by the 1870's and a major business district by the 1900s. It would only take a couple of years before the area was immersed in the development. Only part of the original Douglas plot of land still remains undeveloped, only because that ground houses Douglas's body and

¹⁹⁴ Quartermaster's Sale," Chicago Tribune, 24 July 1865, p.4, col.1.

¹⁹⁵ "Camp Douglas," Chicago Tribune, 7 September 1865, p.4, col.2.

¹⁹⁶ Levy, 341.

now is a State Historic Site known as the Douglas Tomb State Memorial. Though the area began to bustle, the area “declined for the next 52 years and became a notorious slum.”¹⁹⁷ The original grassland that was owned by Stephen A. Douglas was cleared and redeveloped several times from a camp ground, to a commercial and residential development, and into a slum only to return to an open grassy field it currently is today.

Conclusions

Though the camp began its development as a rendezvous point for soldiers to be trained and sent to the front lines during the war, the area was drastically changed with the addition of twelve thousand prisoners of war from the Confederate States. The buildings that were originally built by the State of Illinois to house their troops would be repaired time and again over a four-year period. In many texts the condition of the camp, especially the cheaply built barracks, is the leading focus when discussing why the death rate was so high at the site. However, early in the war the prisoners were truly being housed in the same barracks once occupied by the Federal troops. Consequently, over time the haphazard development of the camp to the east and north caused the grounds to become muddy and full of filth as the barracks began to fall apart. Much of the damage though can be construed to have come from the neglect of the paroled Union troops. The damage did not come from the prisoners but came from the paroled federal troops who felt like they were continuing to be treated like prisoners while on the same soil they had fought for only months earlier.

¹⁹⁷ Levy, 369.

Still, the federal troops played a role in the destruction of the built environment. In many cases the prisoners only damaged the camp that they lived in. The destruction of their bunks to create ladders as an escape route signified the lengths taken to return home but hurt the living arrangements they would have to go back to. The treatment of the prisoners was harsh due to the conditions they were placed in, especially the northern climate and the cheaply constructed barracks. But, still the prisoners in Douglas did have additional luxuries that prisoners in other camps did not. For instance the prisoners on warm days were able to play the current game of baseball in the courtyards or fly kites on several occasions. Though life was bad and miserable through most of their time in camp, many of those residents never left Chicago upon the end of the war.¹⁹⁸

Camp Douglas was the one camp that began by using a training camp, and was able to reorganize its buildings to best fit the needs of the prisoners in a centralized organizational plan developed by the camp commanders. In many cases such as Camp Morton or Camp Butler, the camps began and continued to develop haphazardly in all directions. In creating this haphazard built environment, buildings and facilities were stretched out along the landscape. Camp Douglas began to develop in this manner until the barracks were reorganized and the sewer and water system was dug adding to the theorized plan created by the camp commander and not the Union prison system. With the reorganization of the camp through the organization of prison barracks into several

¹⁹⁸ Levy, 337.

rows, it became almost a self-sustaining city. Very little information is published about the construction of the barracks and other structures found throughout the camp. In most cases when the camp is discussed structurally, it involves the discussion of the cheaply built barracks being the cause of the hardships that the prisoners had to endure. Though the barracks were built of cheap material, it is only partly the reason for the hardships which they endured. The climate is cold in the winter and barracks were only constructed of wood with no sort of insulation.

However, it must also be recognized that the men living in that environment played a role in the destruction of the barracks where they were housed. The burning of barracks in disgust of the administration of the camp and the dismantling of bunks to create ladders to escape only added to the hardships the prisoners would have to endure. With the continuous construction taking place at the site throughout all of 1864, it is easy to ascertain that the commanding officer was trying to create a better living environment for the prisoners held in Camp Douglas, and is really shown through the persistent negotiations with Col. Hoffman about supplying the camp with a water and sewer line which was able to help lower the amount of disease that was spread throughout camp as part of the theorized plan. With eight thousand prisoners occupying the camp at any point, it was a large accomplishment to continue to develop and repair the building throughout the camp. Even though the camp was a harsh place to live everything was trying to be done to create a livable environment.

Chapter V: Alton Military Prison

Introduction

The introduction of a Civil War prison in Illinois's first state penitentiary is a perspective of a wider plan throughout the Union early in the war. In the early portion of the war, many of the eastern prison camps were using prisons and forts because they were already constructed to hold prisoners. Like the reuse of the training camps previously mentioned, the reuse of the penitentiary creates a fine opportunity for the United States government which was not willing to spend much money to construct prisons for the captured Confederate soldiers being escorted north to be confined for a period of the war. Throughout the north, other facilities such as former forts along the east coast were being converted into prisons. The same idea was being done in Richmond, VA in the case of Libby Prison, which was a converted warehouse building. The infrastructure was already present and it took less money to run and outfit the buildings compared to building a camp from scratch to be used for what was supposed to be only a short period of time. After the war lingered on, new infrastructure was needed throughout the prison. However, the problems that caused the penitentiary to be moved in 1856, began to reemerge as the war progressed causing the camp to undergo new development to try to fix those problems and caused some of the prison

facilities to be moved outside the prison stockade walls into the City of Alton, IL. Yet, the Alton Military Prison also fell into the category of the decentralized design plan. Little was done to the site as far as construction because it was too costly to create additions to the quarried rock prison, therefore the camp constructed buildings throughout the landscape wherever dry land could be found, which was usually outside the stockade walls as there was very little room within the walls to construct other buildings.

Illinois's First Prison

Illinois's first prison was beginning to take shape early in the 1820's. By this time a larger nationwide movement was evolving in the area of reform policy.¹⁹⁹ With this new evolving idea of a state prison system, there was going to have to be a method to finance, locate, and construct the prison. One of the men responsible for fighting to construct a state prison was John Reynolds.²⁰⁰ Reynolds "was able to maneuver Congress into allowing the sale of 40,000 acres of saline land which had become worthless."²⁰¹ With the sale of this land in the southeastern section of the state (the Gallatin County Saline Reserve), the money was divided between the eastern and western portion of the state. The western portion of the state allocated its half of the revenue around 1826, to construct a penitentiary in Alton.²⁰² However, it was not until

¹⁹⁹ Jann Cox, *Alton Military Penitentiary in the Civil War: Small Pox and Burial on the Alton Harbor Islands* (Alexandria, VA: Army Corp of Engineers), 45-46, St. Louis District Historic Properties Management Report No. 36.

²⁰⁰ Carla Totten, "Alton Military Prison" (MA Thesis, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, 1983), 3.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² Cox, 46.

1830, with the election of Reynolds as Governor of Illinois that his plan for a prison began to be constructed.²⁰³

In 1826, as part of the provision for the first state penitentiary, the provision also established a need for a construction site. Therefore, “ex-Governor Bond, William P. McKee and Gershom Jayne, members of the penitentiary commission, selected a prison site on the Mississippi River near Alton.”²⁰⁴ With the selection of the site, the commission set out to acquire the land. After long negotiations with the land owner, William Russell conveyed ten acres to the Governor of Illinois for use by the State.

Yet, once again, it was not until the election of John Reynolds as Governor of Illinois that construction began on Illinois’s First State Penitentiary in 1830. Consequently, it took three years, to complete the prison and be fully functional and inhabitable. The prison’s design plan called for the inmates to be able to “perform hard labor in silence during the day but were confined to separate quarters at night.”²⁰⁵ This plan would later be called the Auburn Plan.

The prison was to be built by a man named Ivory, but he left Alton before the construction had begun. Therefore, the construction was handled by Joel Finch who was to do the woodwork and Lawrence Stone who was contracted to do the masonry.²⁰⁶ The original construction of the prison called for the construction of “three tiers of prison

²⁰³ Totten, 3.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ Totten, 5.

²⁰⁶ Ruth Means, “Old Penitentiary Wall,” National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 30 November, 1973, Illinois Historic Preservation Agency –Preservation Services.

cells [eight on each tier], workshops, warden's office and residence were enclosed by four prison walls, twenty-five feet high "207 330 feet deep by 260 feet wide208 constructed of limestone, quarried from the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River. On top of each of these walls was a catwalk and at the corner of each of the intersections, was a sentry station or guard tower to have surveillance over the outside courtyard.209 Due to the design of the building, the walls were flawed from the very start. Once constructed, the state realized that the site had poor drainage and that lower wall was within eight feet of the high water line.210 This mistake would be a large downfall for the penitentiary and later the prison camp.

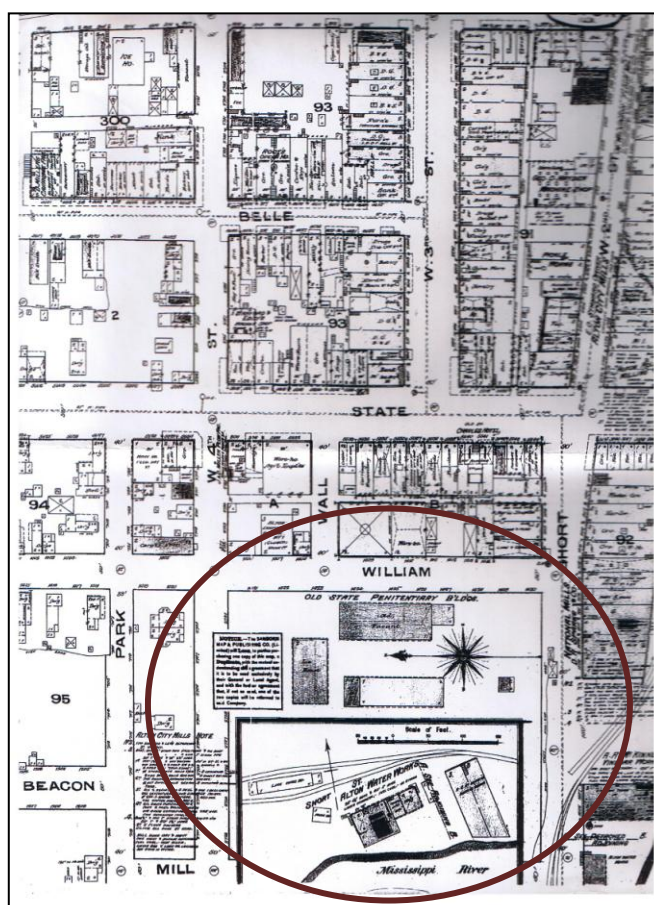


Figure12. Circled in the image is the plat of the Alton Military Prison and Illinois' First State Penitentiary. Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps 1885, Mapping Services, Illinois State Library.

²⁰⁷ Totten, 4.

²⁰⁸ Means

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ Cox, 48.

There was little in the way of design changes until 1846-47, when another 96 cells were added to the east end of the prison. These new cells would be constructed to the same dimensions as those previously in use. The plan also called for the completion of 14 unfinished cells. There were other changes that began to take place as part of this authorization by the State General Assembly. These changes consisted of the alterations for ventilation and admission of light.²¹¹ At the time there was little need for light because prisoners were leased out to merchants throughout the city of Alton. However, the necessity of ventilation was a large issue at the time. The cells, four-feet by six-feet and seven-feet high,²¹² were ventilated by the small barred slit in the exterior wall and a small hole in the solid oak cell door.²¹³ Another addition created by this authorization was the erection of an “additional story to the warden’s house in niche at South West angle of the outer wall to be three stories high and forty-four by thirty-six feet, and built of stone or brick.”²¹⁴ Without photos of the warden’s home, it is difficult to say which of the two materials the warden chose for the construction of this addition. Several of the other alterations completed to the prison consisted of building a cooper’s shop, a cistern, a kitchen to adjoin the dining room, a smith’s shop, wagon maker, and the construction of a common sewer system. It is also noted that these expenditures were not to exceed \$5,000.²¹⁵ Yet, it is interesting to note that at this time there were still not bathing houses for inmates. The inmates had to “wash hands and face in buckets in the

²¹¹ Draft of a Speech Made by Mrs. Barbara Godfrey regarding the First State Prison of Illinois, Built at Alton 1830-31. [ca.],13, Illinois Room, Hayner Public Library , Alton Illinois.

²¹² Means.

²¹³ Totten, 6.

²¹⁴ Speech by Mrs. Barbara Godfrey, 13.

²¹⁵ Ibid,13-14.

shops.”²¹⁶ Between 1855-57, the State Legislature approved the addition of another one hundred and four cells at the cost of \$35,000.

Consequently, in the last authorization of improvements to the facility, the state began to notice the extreme hazards with the site as well as the demographics of the prisoners that were being held. The ground surrounding the prison was haphazardly terraced and created swampy environments throughout the courtyard. During the rainy season, usually in mid-fall and spring, the hospital located in the basement of the penitentiary would flood. The hospital also had continual problems due to the unlighted and unventilated area in which it was placed.²¹⁷ The penitentiary warden attempted to solve the problem by relocating the hospital to the top floor of the warden’s home.²¹⁸ Even with the new construction of cells and the hospital, the pressure to close the site because of the constant maintenance continued to debilitate the site and the state’s funds. Dorothea Dix, known for her national campaign on prison reform, visited the prison in 1847 and “condemned it as filthy and unfit.”²¹⁹ These problems would further be compounded by the majority (237) of the inmates having come from the area around Cook County which was growing rapidly due to the expansion of the current City of Chicago. After considering several options on how to confront the situation surrounding the penitentiary, the state legislature decided to relocate the State Penitentiary to Joliet, IL. As part of the relocation of the prison a new facility was built consisting of one

²¹⁶ Ibid, 14.

²¹⁷ Means.

²¹⁸ Cox, 48.

²¹⁹ Charlotte Stetson, *The Best of Alton* (St. Louis, MO: G. Bradley Publishing, 1999), 7. *Illinois Room, Hayner Public Library, Alton, Illinois.*

thousand cells. However, in 1857 the land occupied by the penitentiary was sold to Lorenzo P. Sanger and Samuel K. Casey for their work on the new prison facility in Joliet. The actual transfer of ownership would take place three years from the date of the sale. The transfer of prisoners would take place between 1859-60, leaving the site vacant and deteriorating by the outbreak of the American Civil War in April 1861.

Prisoners Arrive at the Vacant Prison

At the outbreak of the American Civil War, the need for multiple prisoner-of-war camps in the western theater was at a minimum. The main prisoner-of-war camps up until the end of 1861 consisted of two facilities located within St. Louis, Missouri. However, after long campaigns throughout both Missouri and then later Tennessee, the need arose for an additional camp located in the west. Therefore, with the vacancy caused by the transfer of prisoners to Joliet in 1859-1860, the idea of reusing the facility was presented by Major General Henry Halleck, who was the Commanding Officer of the Department of Missouri.

Halleck sent orders on Dec. 31, 1861, to Lieutenant Colonel James B. McPherson to inspect the former penitentiary in Alton. As part of Lieutenant McPherson's inspection, he reported that the prison could be made into a facility which could house an estimated 1,750 prisoners at an estimated cost of \$2,415.²²⁰ It would only take a little over a month to have the improvements made. It is unknown what improvements

²²⁰ Charles Stetson, Don J. Huber, and Robert St. Peter, *Alton Remembered* (St. Louis, Mo: G. Bradley Publishing, 2000), 69. Illinois Room, Hayner Public Library, Alton, Illinois.

were made. The first prisoners of war walked through the gates of the new Alton Military Prison on February 9, 1862.

It is clear that the original plans for occupying the site were not clearly defined at the outset of the newly reformed prison because nearly three days after the first prisoners arrived on site, trouble was already arising due to lack of space. Several of the buildings surrounding the sites were being rented by the army as storerooms and as the offices for the Quartermaster's Department.²²¹ Still, by April 1862, the camp contained seven hundred and ninety-one prisoners of war which was well under the nearly one thousand that McPherson said that the facility could hold. This was already causing problems as prisoners were sleeping in the wide passage ways running between cells. Within these wide passage ways were sets of double bunks which were capable of providing sleeping space for two prisoners. The hospital on the other hand was well capable of providing for the sick early in the prison's use. It consisted of a very large well-ventilated hall which to this point was not yet over crowded.

It would not take long before the prisoners were beginning to add their own personality to the built environment. It was not uncommon for prisoners during the Civil War to try tunneling out of their confined space. Nevertheless, it only took the prisoners five months to begin tunneling out of the prison. On July 26, 1862, a guard found a

²²¹ The Civil War CD-ROM, "Series II-Volume III. Union Correspondence, Orders, Etc. Relating to Prisoners of War and State From February 19, 1861, to June 12, 1862. #10," 12 February 1862, [CD-ROM] (Carmel, IN: Guild Press, 2000).

tunnel fifty to sixty-feet long and several feet below the surface of the exterior wall foundation.²²²

Even so, little in the way of repairs would even be spoken of until April 1863. For over a year, the actual prison and the outlying secondary buildings began to deteriorate with no attempt to repair necessary architectural features such as roofs or walls. On April 20, 1863, it was stated that the roof over the principal hospital facility was leaking badly and needed to be repaired soon. By this time the Dix-Hill Cartel (or prisoner exchange) was underway and at this time the Alton Military Prison had a limited number of prisoners confined within the prison walls. The Commanding Officer of the Prison at the time, T. Hendrickson, stated that the repair should be made right away since there were few prisoners confined there, but wondered who would finance the repairs. Since the building was being rented, it would either come from the quartermaster's fund, the land owner, or the prison fund.²²³ It was then decided that the repairs would be made from the prison fund and the remaining expenses would be transferred to the quartermaster's office to be paid.²²⁴

²²² The Civil War CD-ROM, "Series II-Volume IV. Union Correspondence, Orders, Etc. Relating to Prisoners of War and State From June 13, 1862, to November 30, 1862. #13," 26 July 1862, [CD-ROM] (Carmel, IN: Guild Press, 2000).

²²³ The Civil War CD-ROM, "Series II-Volume V. Union Correspondence, Orders, Etc. Relating to Prisoners of War and State From December 1, 1863, to June 10, 1863. #21," 20 April 1863, [CD-ROM] (Carmel, IN: Guild Press, 2000).

²²⁴ *Ibid*, #21, 25 April 1863.

The roof of the hospital in need of repair should have been easily fixed. However, the roof was consistently flat and constructed of a “composition material”²²⁵ which allowed for water to stand during rainy weather. The contractor at the time did not believe that the roof could be fixed to the standard that water would not stand and cause problems any more. Therefore, the contractor believed that the best solution to create a tight roof was to add an entirely new roof over the previous one.²²⁶ The estimated cost that was proposed to the War Department via the Quartermaster was \$2,000, but also mentioned the need for additional space for the soldiers guarding the prison, as they are limited to a small sixteen-foot square building on the perimeter of the actual prison.²²⁷ However, the actual contents of the estimate is not found in the written documentation in the War of the Rebellion series, leaving questions unanswered about the actual construction that took place during this time period.

By the middle of 1863, a large epidemic of smallpox had begun to sweep through the prison causing a great influx of patients into the prison hospital. This also created a need to separate the smallpox patients from the other patients being treated for wounds or other sicknesses. In seeing the need to create separate spaces, several of the commanding officers within camp set out to find a building suitable to house the smallpox hospital. After several attempts at locating a building appropriate for the hospital facility, it was proposed to move it to a small island in the Mississippi River due

²²⁵ *Ibid*, #23, 8 May 1863

²²⁶ *Ibid*.

²²⁷ Russell Alger, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series. 2, Vol.5* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1899), 569.

to its secluded nature. While negotiating to use the island, the smallpox patients were held in a small tent camp in the woods with a good spring, nearly two miles south of the prison.²²⁸ It was not until October 17, that correspondence relates that the smallpox hospital had been moved to the new permanent home on the island, later known as "Smallpox Island." At the same time, other modifications were being conducted in one of the two wards of the prison. The hard wood floor in one of the prison wards was laid earlier in the month of October. However, the quartermaster solved the problem of poor ventilation within the prison cells by using an already constructed shaft which opened up into each of the cells and which was connected to a larger shaft on the outside of the building. Thus, the shaft on the exterior provided enough fresh air to circulate throughout each of the cells.²²⁹ The one problem that was not solved by this time was the overcrowding. By, November 6, 1863, it is reported that the prisoners were confined to less than two hundred cubic feet per prisoner.

The structural capacity of the building and the wall were beginning to show signs of serious deterioration by December 1863. The twenty-five-foot high wall surrounding the prison had taken a beating with the overcrowding of the prison and the multiple attempts to either scale the wall or damage the wall to allow for a major escape. It is reported that the wall was in such bad condition by this time that it was being propped

²²⁸ The Civil War CD-ROM, "Series II-Volume VI. Union Correspondence, Orders, Etc. Relating to Prisoners of War and State From June 11, 1863, to March 31, 1864. #8," 9 August 1863, [CD-ROM] (Carmel, IN: Guild Press, 2000).

²²⁹ *Ibid*, #16, 17 October 1863.

up and could lead to a serious attempt for an escape. Yet, it is also noted that the wall could be “cheaply rebuilt by the labor of prisoners.”²³⁰

It was also by this time that there was beginning to be a high death rate throughout the camp. The high death rate could be partially blamed on the increased number of dead suffering from smallpox. At this time there was a large need for a “dead house” on the prison site. Therefore, an open small wooden framed shed located within the prison’s wall, but not connected to the prison itself, was used for this purpose. The dead house or shed would need to be enclosed though well ventilated and have proper lighting and adequate tables added to the shed to perform post-mortem examinations of the dead.²³¹

Yet the problems for the hospital and the dead continued on throughout 1864. In April, it was discussed that the dead house still was not completed and that the dead were just stacked under the shed roof until they could be buried. On the other hand those that were nearly dead in the hospital were not in much better condition. One of the wards was completely unusable because of a sink that was defective and the second ward though it was still being used, had a roof that leaked so badly that when it rained the top floor flooded²³² which led to the trickling of water through other subsequent floors. It was not until May 14, 1864 that the necessary attention was given to both the

²³⁰ Ibid, #27, 7 December 1863.

²³¹ Ibid, #39, 18 February 1864.

²³² The Civil War CD-ROM, "Series II-Volume VII. Union Correspondence, Orders, Etc. Relating to Prisoners of War and State From April 1, 1864, to December 31, 1864. #4," 24 April 1864, [CD-ROM] (Carmel, IN: Guild Press, 2000).

leaking roof over the hospital ward and the tattered north wall which was being braced up.²³³

Throughout 1864, the overcrowded prison had been taking criticism from the public. Therefore by August 1864, a new hospital was completed within the courtyard of the prison thus leaving the old hospital able to be stacked with bunks and used as space for the general prison population.²³⁴ The construction of the new hospital had commenced in mid July 1864 and was completed by August. The final product constructed consisted of a “two story wooden pavilion building, 183.5’ x 26’, with two wards of 95,420 cubic feet each.”²³⁵ The floor was elevated from the ground via stone pillar in order to deter prisoners from tunneling under the building. Along with the addition of the new hospital on the prison site, came the addition of bathing facilities and gas lighting throughout the prison courtyard. All of these additions to the prison were constructed just to the east of the main cell building.²³⁶ These would be the last major changes initiated at the prison while it was occupied by the United States Military.

Following the War

Following the end of the war, the military remained in possession of the prison until all the final inspections had been conducted by the United States Government. Just following the war, the 51st Missouri Volunteers were placed in Alton to guard the former

²³³ Ibid, #6, 14 May 1864.

²³⁴ Ibid, #22, 4 August 1864.

²³⁵ Cox, 100.

²³⁶ Ibid, 100-101.

penitentiary and prisoner of war facility, where their job was just to preserve “the military prison, barracks... at that place, after the public building shall have been vacated.”²³⁷ Alton Military Prison would be vacated by July 13, 1865 leaving the penitentiary, temporary tent shelters, and the new hospital to be guarded. It would not take long, though longer than some former prisoner of war camps to be disassembled. By 1870-75, the building was being raised. Attempts were made to establish another prison in its place but the effort fell short. Much of the stone from the building was hauled off and used in the construction of other buildings and structures torn down, moved to Crystal City, and used in road construction.²³⁸ In the early 1900’s, the site was adaptively reused in the creation of a city park. Only one small corner remains on the site as a fragment of what once used to be there. This small fragment of the wall still holds the memories of what happened not only during the war, but also during its time as Illinois’s first state penitentiary, being marked by an Illinois state historic marker.

Conclusion

This site is a great example of prison camps throughout the Civil War that were used previously as other forms of establishments, whether warehouse, fort or prison. However, with regard to the Alton Military Prison there was much less addition to the prison compared to other prison camps in the area because it was landlocked by other civilian buildings in the area as well as the material used in the prisons original

²³⁷ The Civil War CD-ROM, "Series I-Volume XLVII. Union Correspondence, Orders, and Returns Relating To Operations in Louisiana and the Trans-Mississippi States and Territories From April 1, 1865, to June 30, 1865. #40," 24 June 1865, [CD-ROM] (Carmel, IN: Guild Press, 2000).

²³⁸ Stetson, 32-33.

construction. Therefore, Alton also falls into the decentralized design plan that has been seen in previous prison camps. Consequently, the problems that allowed the state penitentiary to fail also were the same problems that caused the biggest setbacks in the military prison. The biggest problem stemmed from water which infiltrated the site causing the large outbreaks of smallpox to be carried throughout the camp. This site was once described as a feudal castle but became a place of death and disease which



Figure 13. The remaining portion of the stockade wall from the Alton Military Prison, which has been relocated from its original location. Camera facing northwest, Photograph taken by Travis Ratermann, 30 December 2008.

the development of the prison could not help at that time without leaving the prison entirely abandoned again.

The use of a well-built structure aided in keeping the prisoners from escaping. However,

through having a well-built exterior shell other areas caused the biggest problems in the camp. The introduction of a smallpox victim into camp has little to do with the structure of the building or the camp. But, the mismanagement of the prisoners belongs to the hospital doctor or surgeon and the method of transportation to the prison. However, the spread

of the disease was accelerated by the close confinement that the prisoners had to deal with daily. Once again, through looking at the repairs, alteration and addition to the camp, there was a strong push to keep the environment clean and provide a dry environment. It is also noted that once a larger problem was spotted by the surgeon general of the prison system, action rectified the problem as was the case with limited ventilation where a fresh air chute was added in between cells to create a better flow of fresh air through the camp. The problem that still exists is the design layout of the prison. Very few photos are available of the prison and those images that are available are taken from a long distance or during the dismantling of the prison for its stone. Though this prison is the reuse of a site, it is unlike the other camps which reused wooden training facilities which were easy to alter on site. Once again, the site was limited by resources, land availability and money and was only able to make necessary improvements as Col. Hoffman was not willing to spend the Federal government's money on unneeded items therefore causing the prison to make repairs with the money from the prison fund only contributing the disorganized expansion of the camp outside the walls of the former penitentiary.

Chapter VI: Rock Island Barracks, Rock Island, IL

Rock Island is an oddity compared to the other four camps discussed. Rock Island was not a former training camp which had already developed structurally before the advent of prisoners into the camp's walls. Rock Island was able to start with a clean slate developmentally and work to create an environment that best fit the realm of a prisoner-of-war camp through a centralized design plan. While other camps were developing from within previously used camps, Rock Island was able to devise a plan to fit the most prisoners into a small space because they were not hindered by the placement of buildings and other structures before the camp was authorized as a prisoner-of-war camp. Buildings were built for a purpose rather than retrofitting a building which was previously used for other purposes in the case of the training camps turned prisoner camps. Yet, having the advantage of a design plan, the camp was put to use without key structures that would need to be built only months after opening the gates for the admission of the prisoners, especially with the absence of a hospital on site. Therefore, even with the advance planning and organizing of the camp, developmental gaps still lingered on at the site through the camp's final days of the war.

Rock between Water: Life on Rock Island before the War

Up to 1838, the 948-acre island was merely covered with vegetation and used by the tribal groups as a hunting ground with no white man coming in contact with the island, with the exception of Joliet and Marquette, until the beginning of the 1800s. During this period, the island was used by the military as a small station though no permanent fortifications were ever placed on the island.²³⁹ It was not until 1831 that a permanent outpost was located on the island, and named Fort Armstrong and positioned on a rock bluff overlooking the river. This military presence would only remain until 1836 when the garrison was moved to Fort Snelling, which was located north on the Mississippi River, leaving Fort Armstrong unoccupied. Following the removal of the military from the island, the land was left to an Indian agent named General Street until he was removed in 1838 but still remained in the hands of the succeeding Indian agent Col. Davenport until 1840.²⁴⁰

By 1840, several of the buildings were repaired and an ordnance department was established at the fort under the command of the United States Ordnance Department. It would remain in the possession of the department until 1845 when the fort and island were put under the command of a civilian agent and several of the buildings removed to the St. Louis Arsenal. The fort and island would remain under this and the War Department's eye until 1862 when the Rock Island Arsenal became a well-designed idea. The military and governmental influence on the island would never go

²³⁹ Ibid, 8-14.

²⁴⁰ Ibid, 20.

away with the addition of the Arsenal. But only months later, the addition of a prisoner-of-war camp would be constructed and only added to the influence of the government on the island.

Two years in, and still a Prison Problem

With the military and the government influences on the island present already, it was only fitting that the new Arsenal, delegated to be constructed April 1861, be added to this northern site, as the war with the southern states began to rage.²⁴¹ However, upon arrival at the newly designated site for the arsenal, Major Kingsbury found several hundred workmen “busy [laying] out and constructing the prison for Confederate prisoners of war.”²⁴² The feud between the two parties, those building the prison camp and the men building the arsenal, was just beginning to take shape. It is not known if the government really understood the role the island would play in both of these two facilities. This can be understood, as the prison was not seen at the time of the Arsenal’s designation. However, the prison was already under construction according to the plan in July 1863 while the Arsenal was not to begin its first building until November 1863.²⁴³

²⁴¹ The Civil War CD-ROM, "Series I-Volume II. Correspondence, Orders, and Returns Relating To Operations In Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia From April 16, 1861, to July 31, 1861. #2," 27 April 1862, [CD-ROM] (Carmel, IN: Guild Press, 2000).

²⁴² Weapons Command’s Information Office, *Rock Island Barracks 1863-1865*, , RIA Pamphlet 870-3 (Government Printing Office, 1967), 1.

²⁴³ Ibid.

By July 14, 1863, the construction had already begun on “the depot” as the prison was called which would be used to off load both prisoners and supplies. However, it is described that the plans used in the construction of the camp may “be modified however, as the character of the ground shall render necessary.”²⁴⁴ There is a question as to how much discretion was used in the modification of the buildings through this delegated power. However, it is also at this time that the order was given for the construction of the stockade wall, which was ordered to be built “twelve feet high with a sentinel’s walk all around the outside four feet below the top.”²⁴⁵ The sentinel walk also contained small sentry posts every one hundred feet,²⁴⁶ which were

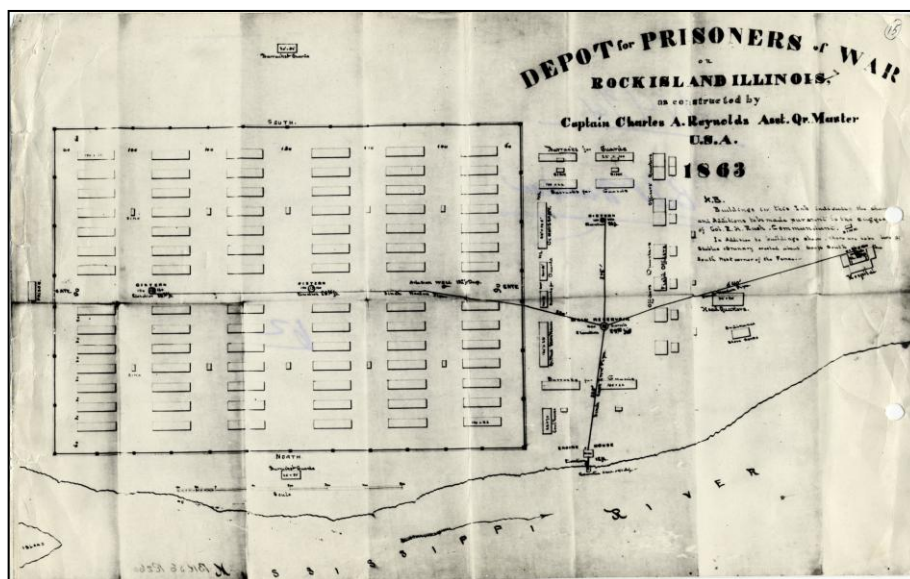


Figure 14. Diagram of Rock Island Prison from 1863. Source: Rock Island Arsenal Museum.

constructed of vertical boards on three sides with the fourth side opening to the walkway through a rounded opening in the

²⁴⁴ CW. Series II- Volume VI, Union and Confederate Correspondence, Orders, ETC., Relating To Prisoners of War and State From June 11, 1863, to March 31, 1864.#5, 14 July 1863.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ T.R. Walker, “Rock Island Prison Barracks,” *Civil War Prisons*, edited by William B. Hesseltine (Kent, Oh: Kent State University, 1992),49.

post. This enclosure was covered by a slanted roof. There were also two double-gate sally ports from which to enter the grounds occupied by the Confederate prisoners, which were located on the east and west sides of camp.²⁴⁷

Also created along with the stockade wall was what is today known as the “dead line.” The construction of the “dead line” was typically just a broad rail fence found in camps like Camp Morton and Camp Douglas. At Rock Island, though, the dead line was constructed of a small whitewashed post stuck into the ground signifying the point of no return on the south side of the camp. The other three sides had a ditch dug on the inside portion of the stockade wall to signify the dead line.²⁴⁸ The line gets its name from the fact that if a prisoner crossed the white post or entered the ditch, he was seen as trying to escape and was at once shot. The line was really a deterrent to keep prisoners from trying to charge the stockade wall which was barely standing up on its own by the later part of the war.

It is also at this time that the Quartermaster General had already figured out that drilling would be nearly impossible through this large rock. Therefore, it was devised that water was to be acquired through a force-pump system from the river. It is estimated that the pumps and the hoses to run water from the river to the camp would roughly cost \$100 apiece. But still, by September the pumps were still not in working

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Otis Bryan England, *A Short History of the Rock Island Prison Barracks (Revised Edition)*(Rock Island, IL: Historical Office US Army Armament, Munitions and Chemical Command, 2004): 3.

condition thus it was requisitioned that there be six wells dug to twenty-five feet to obtain water.²⁴⁹

The contractor began building the prison barracks and they were described by the Quartermaster- General as needing to be “put up in the roughest and cheapest manner- mere shanties, with no fine work about them, and work should be done by contracts and in the shortest possible time.”²⁵⁰

By December, the Rock Island Prison Barracks were ready for occupation. In between August and December, the contractors had built all the buildings from the original plan which included all eighty-four barracks, the headquarters, kitchens and outbuildings, mess rooms, bakery, and commissary storehouses. It took a lot of lumber and labor from the army itself to complete these projects.

The barracks seem to have been constructed of vertical single-board walls, floor, and roof with tar paper covering the roof and measure one-hundred-feet long by twenty-two feet wide by twelve-feet high and all of the eighty-four barracks faced the east. There were twelve windows located within the barrack, with at least one door on the east façade and one door on the back where the kitchen for the barrack was placed. The kitchen measured eighteen feet by twenty-two feet and was located on the west end of the barrack. There were also two roof-top ventilators which were four-feet long and two-feet wide, this was a real need by this point in many of the other Union prison

²⁴⁹ CW, #12, 11 September 1863.

²⁵⁰ Ibid. #8, 12 August 1863

camps.²⁵¹ Many of the other prison camps had neglected the thought of having ventilators until large out breaks of disease began to run rampant in the camps and only then did the other camps begin to add ventilation.

The barracks themselves were organized in a manner unlike any of the other prisons described in the text. Due to the planned layout of the prison, unlike the haphazardly built other camps that developed as time passed with no organization, Rock Island's barracks were all designed and constructed in the same way. The planned design of the layout of the prison had the barracks built "thirty feet apart and with one exception, faced on to streets one hundred feet wide. The fourth row opened on an avenue one hundred thirty feet wide- one of two avenues bisecting the prison."²⁵²

The bisecting of both the prison and barracks thus created four smaller communities. Like other prison camps at the time, the prison barracks were also numbered. In the case of Rock Island, numbering began with the barracks located on the east side of the camp and worked its way to the west. However, instead of going in numerical order, the odd numbers were located on the northern portion of the camp and the even numbers on the southern portion, with one of the two one-hundred-thirty feet roads bisecting these two areas.²⁵³

²⁵¹ Walker, 48.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ "Rock Island Barracks," *Records of the War Department, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Record Group 92: Correspondence file documents relating to Rock Island Cemetery and Construction work at Rock Island* (Washington: The National Archives, 1959) Rock Island Arsenal.

Though each barrack had its own kitchen, it did not mean it had its own sink (bathroom). Sinks were located in between each row of barracks and generally sat near the center of the row. This sequence of sinks holds true for both the north and south portion of the camp. Located within the artery running east to west, there were two cisterns and an artesian well which was nine-inches wide by one-hundred-twenty-five

feet deep,²⁵⁴ used to retrieve water.

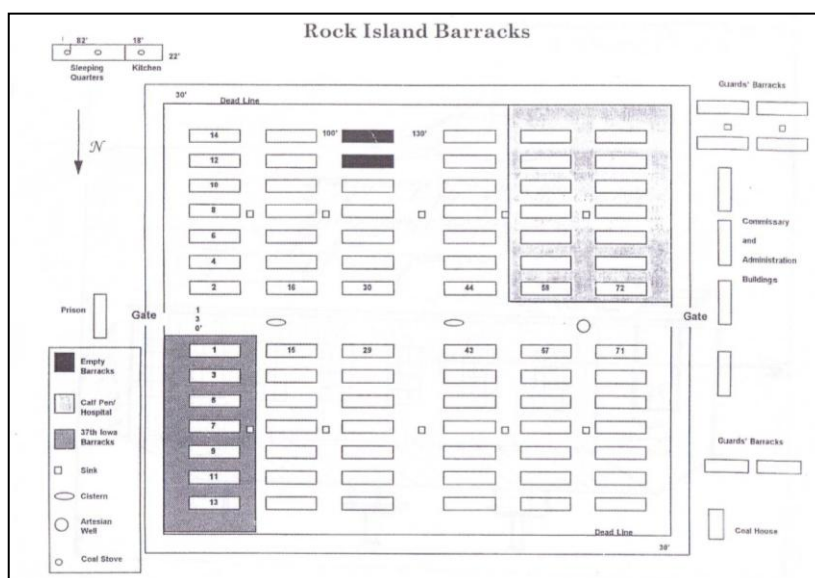


Figure 15. Layout of the prisoner barracks, including the use of barracks as hospitals and garrison barracks. Source: "Consolidated Correspondence file documents relating to Rock Island Cemetery [sic] and construction work at Rock Island," The National Archives. Rock Island Arsenal Museum.

The guardhouses were constructed in a shabbier manner than the barracks. The guard houses consisted of a structure twenty feet by forty feet with one third of each end

"divided off by a board partition, one being used as a place of confinement for prisoners [and] the remaining partition[ed] for the use of the guards."²⁵⁵ The pure idea of this arrangement was simply contradictory to the need of confinement. Since most of the

²⁵⁴ CW. Series II--Volume VI, Union and Confederate Correspondence, Orders, Etc., Relating to Prisoners of War and State From June 11, 1863, to March 31, 1864.#38, 10 February 1864.

²⁵⁵ Benton McAdams, *Rebels at Rock Island : The Story of a Civil War Prison* (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press,2000),93.

construction was proclaimed to be of green lumber that shrank with the passage of time, it would have been easy to procure food and messages through the walls.²⁵⁶

The first prisoners arrived at their destination on December 3, 1863 to what could be comparatively stated as a great facility, but still lacked necessities such as a hospital.²⁵⁷ The winter of 1863 was a cold one, and the prisoners taken from the south were ill equipped to handle the tough northern winters. As part of this, there was a strong need for a hospital early in the prisoners' stay at Rock Island but one was not yet constructed. Therefore, on January 18, 1864, the commanding officer ordered that barracks for prisoners were already being used as hospitals.²⁵⁸ It is depicted in a drawing in the National Archives that the barracks used consisted of two even-rowed barracks from 58-84 and were located in the southwest portion of the camp (Figure?). However, of those fourteen buildings, only eleven were used. Those eleven were separated from the rest of the prison by a high board fence that was completed by at least March 16, 1864.²⁵⁹

It was nearly one month later on February 10, 1864 that A.M Clark, Acting Medical Inspector of Prisoner of War camps, reported that he had ordered a large addition to the pest house which was already under way on the south shore of the

²⁵⁶ There is no evidence to refute the claims that the boards that were used were of green lumber, other camps are reported to have the same problems. It may be that the lumber really was green or that the myth of the green lumber is being passed from northern camp to camp.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid, #34, 18 January, 1864.

²⁵⁹ CW. Series II- Volume VII, Union and confederate Correspondence, Orders, Etc. Relating to Prisoners of War and State From April 1, 1864, to December 31, 1864. #1, 4 April 1864.

island.²⁶⁰ The pest houses “consisted of five wards, a receiving building, and a laundry.”²⁶¹ Altogether, there were six buildings that made up the pest hospital. The buildings were constructed in the same manner as the barracks. There are differences between the two, in that the pest hospitals are one hundred fifty feet by twenty-two feet by twelve feet and had substantial ventilation vents running along three-quarters of the roof line.²⁶² On either side of the pest hospital were twelve windows to help in the circulation of air and control the spread of the contagious disease (smallpox) prisoners housed there. The first two buildings built only had side ventilation by means of windows, while the last four had both side and ridge ventilation.²⁶³ The pest houses would be finished by March 1, 1864.²⁶⁴ As part of the new pest houses, they (the pest houses) also housed the laundry, a guard house, a dead house, and a building which was used to house random items and attendants.²⁶⁵ There were also two small buildings that were dwellings prior to the prison and were used as a reception area for smallpox patients. One was for the prisoners and the other was used primarily for the garrison troops.²⁶⁶ With the removal of the smallpox patients to the pest houses on the south shore, the former hospital barracks were “thoroughly cleaned and given an interior coat

²⁶⁰ Walker, 50.

²⁶¹ Weapons Command’s Information Office, *Rock Island Barracks 1863-1865*, 4.

²⁶² England, 6.

²⁶³ Neil Dahlstrom, “Rock Island Prison, 1863-1865: Andersonville of the North Dispelled” *Journal of Illinois History* 4(Winter 2001): 298.

²⁶⁴ Walker, 51.

²⁶⁵ CW. Series II- Volume VII, Union and confederate Correspondence, Orders, Etc. Relating to Prisoners of War and State From April 1, 1864, to December 31, 1864. #2, 8 April 19864.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

of whitewash.”²⁶⁷ It also allowed these barracks to be used as non-contagious disease hospitals until a prison hospital was built.²⁶⁸

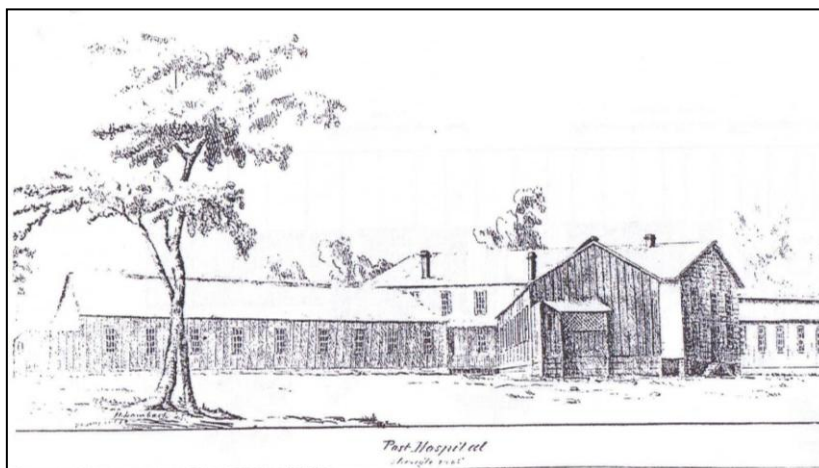


Figure 16. Line drawing of the post hospital at Rock Island. Source: Otis Bryan England, *A Short History of the Rock Island Prison Barracks (Revised Edition)*(Rock Island, IL: Historical Office US Army Armament, Munitions and Chemical Command, 2004):

At the same time the pest hospital was being requisitioned, a post hospital was also being planned for the garrison and had already been approved by both the

commanding officer of the prison and the depot quartermaster.²⁶⁹ The post hospital constructed during this time consisted of a

central building [which housed] medical offices, was located southwest from the stockade...From the four corners of this central building were four ward buildings extending outward at an angle. The ward at the northeast angle ended on the present Gillespie Avenue north of its intersection with North Avenue. The ward at the southwest angle extended in that direction across the present North Avenue, just west of it's [sic] intersection with Gillespie Avenue.²⁷⁰

In a contemporary drawing from the article entitled *A Short History of Rock Island Prison Barracks* by the US Army, the central building is a two-story wood-frame front-gabled

²⁶⁷ Walker, 51.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ CW. Series II--Volume VI, Union and Confederate Correspondence, Orders, Etc., Relating to Prisoners of War and State From June 11, 1863, to March 31, 1864.#38, 10 February 1864.

²⁷⁰ Weapons Command's Information Office, *Rock Island Barracks 1863-1865*, 3-4.

building that is elevated off of the ground. On the front gable there are five windows. Three of the windows are located on the second floor and the other two are located on either side of a centrally located door. The angled hospital wards have nine windows a side with a long ridgeline vent. These wards are of the same single-board construction as the barracks and pest houses.²⁷¹

Even with the construction of several more buildings on the prison site, the ever changing landscape was also being manipulated. It is stated that the prison streets “are to be graded and furnished with surface drains leading to the main sewers.”²⁷² This plan is part of a larger proposal for updating the sewer and water retrieval systems. This proposal would be denied by Colonel Hoffman before finally being passed later during the war.

By March of 1864, the request for another hospital had been approved and designated as the prison hospital. At least ten of the prison barracks were still being occupied by sick prisoners and the construction of the prison hospital was moving along at a slow pace. The process of construction of this system of buildings was slowed by a dictation error by Colonel Hoffman who wrote \$1,800 rather than \$18,000.²⁷³ Upon finding out that the amount he sent through was substantially less than was actually needed, he stopped the construction at once leaving it partially constructed throughout the rest of 1864 and some of 1865. However, the partially constructed hospital had

²⁷¹ England, 26.

²⁷² CW. Series II--Volume VI, #38, 13 February 1864.

²⁷³ CW. #42, 14 March 1864.

begun to take shape and over half of it was constructed. The executive building and the western seven hospital barracks were nearly completed when the order to stop the construction was given. However, it was ordered by Colonel Johnson, the post commander, that the work already in progress be completed.²⁷⁴ The construction of the hospital was back underway by May 1864, with the estimate of the finished product totaling \$24,225.²⁷⁵

Yet, the start of March 1864 was already beginning to see problems for the camp as the necessity of water and drainage began to worsen. As the sinks and privies were grossly under thought when designing the barracks, the sinks had already been moved three times in a little over a year. There were a limited number of locations that could be used for this facility. Therefore, the idea of procuring better ideas for the viability of the sink and their locations was introduced by C.A. Reynolds, Captain and Assistant Quartermaster.

Directly south of the 130-foot avenue and 200 feet distant from the fence, the ridge running east and west in the rear of the prison is forty feet above the level of the river at low –water mark and ten and fifteen feet higher than any point where water will be require. Upon the ridge it is proposed to build a round reservoir of stone 150 feet in diameter and fifteen feet high...Through the center of the 130-foot avenue it is proposed to dig a sewer leading into the river, and over which is to a line of double privies extending from the 90-foot avenue north to within thirty feet of the prison fence. The sewer is to be supplied with water from the reservoir, and by means of gates and levels three or four feet of water is to be kept standing in the sewer to receive the excrements, which as often as necessary are to be flushed in to the river. At the south and upper end of the sewer are to be the wash and bath houses for the whole prison, having stationary tubs with drainage into the sewer. ... Water for drinking and culinary purposes is to be supplied the prison and post by means of cast-iron pipe and hydrants.

²⁷⁴ CW. Series II- Volume VII, Union and confederate Correspondence, Orders, Etc. Relating to Prisoners of War and State From April 1, 1864, to December 31, 1864. #1, 8 April 1864.

²⁷⁵ CW., Union and confederate Correspondence, Orders, Etc. Relating to Prisoners of War and State From April 1, 1864, to December 31, 1864. #6, 9 May 1864.

The pipes from the reservoir to the 90-foot avenue to be 8 inches in diameter, and thence through the center of the 90-foot avenue, 4 inches in diameter.²⁷⁶

Though no map is available at this time, the sewer system comprising the southern portion of the camp drained into the main sewage system, while the northern section was constructed of masonry.²⁷⁷ Inevitably, what Reynolds is trying to say with regard to the drinkable water is that the line from the reservoir to the enclosure will be run through an eight-inch cast-iron pipe to the 100 feet avenue and that once in the enclosure, it would go through the center of the avenue in a four-inch cast-iron pipe. At the time of the assessment, it was estimated that the project would cost anywhere between \$15,000 and \$17,000.²⁷⁸ Still even with the very thorough plan, the progression of it was slow in moving across Colonel Hoffman's desk.

What is interesting to note is that by April 8, 1864, most of the Union Army stationed on the island was within the enclosure. As of April 8, twenty-one of the eighty-four barracks were "fenced off from the rest of the enclosure"²⁷⁹ and being used by the several departments housed on the site. Of the twenty-one barracks being used, two were used as store houses for the commissary, one used by the Quartermaster as a distributing store house, eleven as hospitals as previously discussed, six to house garrison troops from Iowa, and one to use as a laundry for the garrison troops. This premise seemed wasteful to Colonel Hoffman by April 16, 1864 because he hurried to

²⁷⁶ CW. Series II- Volume VII, #41, 1 March 1864

²⁷⁷ Dahlstrom, 301.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ CW., Union and confederate Correspondence, Orders, Etc. Relating to Prisoners of War and State From April 1, 1864, to December 31, 1864. #2, 8 April 1864.

order that the quartermaster and commissary storehouses be removed outside of the enclosure along with the garrison troop after their new barracks located outside the east wall of the stockade. He also stated that these barracks which were formerly being used be reverted back to their original purpose in housing prisoners of war.²⁸⁰ Up to this point, the barracks had seen a large amount of change since they were opened. The construction of two hospitals, kitchens and other miscellaneous buildings had cost both the quartermaster general's office and the prison fund a combined \$30,000.²⁸¹ With the removal of the store houses outside of the enclosure, the Command Headquarters moved along with it. The Command Headquarters were relocated eight-hundred and fifty feet west of the prison fence and in line with barrack seventy-three.²⁸² The Headquarter buildings consisted of a large U-shaped building built in the same manner as the barracks. Unlike the larger ridge vents, the headquarters had one small four feet by two feet ridge vent on the smaller section while having a full-length ridge vent over the larger section. Located within the headquarters was the prison post office, the office of the commandant and his assistants, the prison roll office and the Office of the Commander of prisoners.²⁸³ This building was finished by late May 1864.²⁸⁴ One other structure rested with the garrison outside the prison walls.

The life of the prisoners was not as bad as it may seem, though it was not easy by any means. With sympathetic community members throughout the area of Rock

²⁸⁰ Ibid, #3, 16 April 1864.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Weapons Command's Information Office, *Rock Island Barracks 1863-1865*, 3.

²⁸³ England, 15. Taken from a contemporary drawing of the building.

²⁸⁴ Ibid, 3.

Island, a library and school room was constructed to combat the problem of boredom.

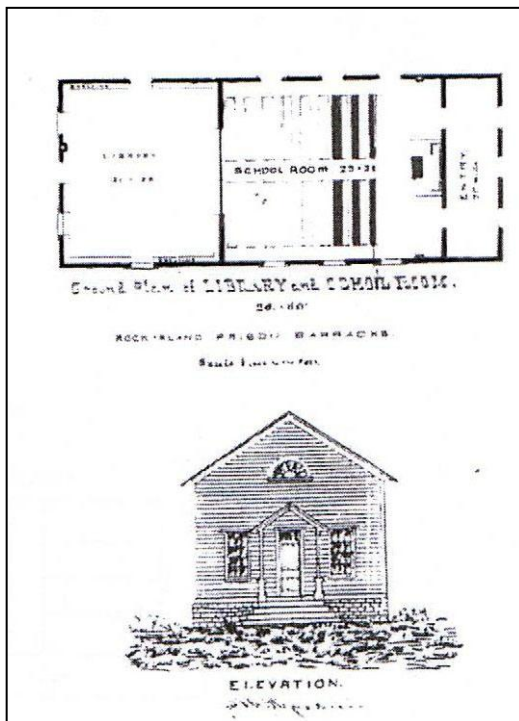


Figure 17. Line drawing of the school room and library at Rock Island Prison Barracks. Source: "Consolidated Correspondence file documents relating to Rock Island Cemetery [sic] and construction work at Rock Island," The National Archives. Rock Island Arsenal Museum.

Those people sympathetic to the treatment of the prisoners stacked the shelves full of books for the prisoners to enjoy. Though the library was small in stature it seemingly helped the prisoners' morale. The building was set on a stone foundation and had a small, quaint side-gabled front porch with a six-over-six single-hung window on either side of the porch and a side-gabled roof. When building the library, the construction was meant to suit the needs of the reader as a half-round window was placed above the door. Upon entering the small library/schoolhouse, you entered in-to the library. There seemed to be two entrances with the entrance for the school room in the

back. Once entering through the back, a prisoner would enter into a small gathering or entry space. Along the right and left side of the front facing wall were doors in which to enter the school room area which housed several rows of pews.²⁸⁵

²⁸⁵ "Ground Plan of Library and School House," *Records of the War Department, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Record Group 92: Correspondence file documents relating to Rock Island Cemetery and Construction work at Rock Island* (Washington: The National Archives, 1959) Rock Island Arsenal.

However, the ever-forming camp was undergoing more changes to better the drainage throughout camp as well as preventing prisoners from escaping under the stockade wall. In doing this, the Commandant decided to have a ten-foot-wide and six-foot-deep trench dug around the inside three walls of the stockade. The south wall was not trenched because of the outcrop of rock so close to the surface. He stated that this would improve drainage for the camp ground and would serve as a safeguard against the escape of prisoners.²⁸⁶ Yet, it did not seem to help, as the prisoners tunneled out of barrack number forty-two right under the parapet.²⁸⁷

By the end of May and beginning of June, the sewer and water reservoir had finally come to fruition. In order to cut down the cost of the construction, the Quartermaster decided to use the labor of the prisoners. The problem of not having free labor, led to the idea of providing the prisoners with compensation if they worked as part of the construction project. It was suggested that the prisoners who worked be paid forty cents a day. However, in Colonel Hoffman's penny-pinching ways, he recommended that the mechanics be paid ten cents per day while the laborers would receive five cents per day. The Secretary of War took the recommendation one step farther in providing the prisoners with full rations. However, the project did hit a lull in October 1, 1864 as several of the prisoners worthy of being exchanged were sent south²⁸⁸ leaving the facility short on laborers, with another two hundred and eighty-one

²⁸⁶ Ibid, #4, 29 April 1864.

²⁸⁷ Ibid, #17, 25 June 1864

²⁸⁸ Ibid, #37, 1 October 1864.

prisoners being sent for exchange on January 16, 1865.²⁸⁹ “The sewage system was not in full operation use until almost a year later, just months before the prison closed.

In the summer of 1864, the camp continued to take shape with the addition of another building to the prison grounds outside of the walls of the prison. The council overseeing the administration of the post had called for a bake house to be built. The bake house was ninety-six feet by forty feet and was of similar construction as the barracks. It still contained single-board walls, with six-over-six single-hung windows and contained three large stoves.²⁹⁰ The bakery was intended to feed the garrison but eventually began feeding the prisoners as well.

With the facility starting to wind down, the final prisoners left camp by July 13, 1865 as part of the prisoner exchange or through taking the oath of allegiance. It was a hope of the Aide of the Camp, O.E. Babcock, that the buildings be preserved because of the Arsenal’s location on the island. The Ordnance Department took over the buildings and used them to house what once was the largest collection of Confederate guns in the country. However, they seemed uninterested in maintaining hastily built buildings and as they decayed, they were torn down and lost forever. The last remaining prison building, the garrison hospital was razed in 1907, ending the final chapter in the history

²⁸⁹ CW., Union and confederate Correspondence, Orders, Etc. Relating to Prisoners of War and State From January 1, 1865, to the End. #4, 16 January 1865.

²⁹⁰ “Bakery,” Rock Island Arsenal Museum. From a line drawing courtesy of the Rock Island Arsenal Museum.

of the prison barracks, leaving only the pictures to tell the story of what once took place on the island.²⁹¹

Farewell to the Rock

With the destruction of the garrison hospital, little was done with the site following the war. It is stated that part of the camp was lost to high water on the river. The remaining portion of the site has been encompassed by the Rock Island Arsenal Golf Course. Several studies have been completed by the Arsenal to gather information on the location of the former prison barracks and place markers are set out on the greens and fairways of the golf course leaving only a hint of what had gone on. Only the island remains the same. Though the camp was planned by the army, several oversights during the construction of the camp left it struggling to fill the holes of an absent hospital and other buildings which should have been designed and constructed along with the barracks. It was obvious by this time that Camp Douglas, Camp Morton, and Camp Butler, all camps within the western theater, had to build hospitals upon these former training camps being commissioned as prisoner-of-war camps. The so called planned camp was stretching for every opportunity to fix its early design mistakes while working around and with the prisoners it was trying to keep within its walls.

Rock Island creates an interesting perspective of how a camp should be designed and laid out to get the most space out of the camp site. Grouping together the barracks of the prisoners creates a symbolic gesture of control and order. Yet, flaws in the

²⁹¹ McAdams, 205.

location of the constructed barracks allowed for the breakdown of that control and order. After it broke down, the camp used the prisoners against themselves in using the prisoners as a labor force for construction on the site. The method in which the labor was used is debilitating to the prisoners because the labor they were performing is constructed to keep them from trying to escape. This idea is really noticeable in the dismantling of the back twenty feet of barracks and the construction of a ditch just inside the stockade wall. Digging the ditch sent a message that tunneling out will be nearly impossible. Therefore prison labor was used to keep the prisoners from that possible escape route and to create a rift between the prisoners inside the camp who were using tunneling as their escape route and those who were doing the work. The one difference between Rock Island and the other camps mentioned is that it, along with Camp Douglas, they were the only two camps to use prison labor to better the built environment

The larger idea presented for Rock Island is that it failed to create a more sanitary environment compared to the other camps. The death toll at Rock Island ranged anywhere from 1,191 to 1,960 dead. This estimated number of dead soldiers is comparable to Camp Morton which had a death toll of nearly 1,616.²⁹² The contributing factors included the position of the camp and barracks on the north side of the island where the north wind was able to wrap through the camp on cold northern days. Though the camp set out to take care of the previous problems, found in the

²⁹² Frances H. Casstevens, "Camp Morton, Indianapolis, Indiana," *Out of the Mouth of Hell: Civil War Prisons and Escapes* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2005), 50.

decentralized design plans it was unable to do so in trying to use the centralized design approach. It was not because the buildings were falling down, in disrepair or organized improperly, but because of the climate in which the camp was placed and prisoners who could not adjust to the climate. Contemporary historians argue that the location of the camp on the north side of the island played into the health of the camp because of the wind out of the north, but that theory is only speculative and hard to substantiate. Yet, the centralized plan organized at Rock Island did create a more controlled internal environment within the camp when discussing ease of access and location of both people and facilities.

Chapter VII: Conclusion

The prison camps of Illinois and Indiana during the Civil War were evolving and changing environments. This thesis has shown how each of these camps developed architecturally through either the use or nonuse of a centralized design plan and how that development led to many of the problems in the camps. As the war exploded across this land, the need for the prisons became dire, thus resulting in the hasty construction of the prison camps throughout the western theater in what has been shown to be a decentralized design plan for all but one of the prison camps.

A unifying thread between all the prison camps was the hurried construction that the camps all underwent. With little to no planning, all the camps were limited originally by the structure already on the sites and rehabilitated quickly in order to hold the soldiers. In many cases, when barracks were constructed, they all used a similar design ranging from 80' to 100' long with a 20' long kitchen addition attached to one end. The kitchen was used less for its original purpose and more for as an area of sleeping. Though the construction and design of the barracks were very similar, there was never a plan that discussed or described, how and where to locate these barracks. In most instances, that is why the additional barracks and other buildings are found scattered through the camp. Another reason for the mismanagement of the built

environment is the change from state control to United State military control. While the camps operated as rendezvous post within the state, the state government was the controlling overseer of the camp. However, upon the United States commissioning of the training or rendezvous point as a prisoner-of-war camp, the controlling party changed to the United States government. Therefore, the original design of the camps were already haphazardly arranged as most states including Illinois and Indiana never thought the war would last for the duration it did or be used as prisoner-of-war camps in the future. This leads to the larger idea that there was little foresight about planning or construction of these camps at the outset of the war. Though all of the camps contained barracks constructed of green wood with three tiered bunks, the barracks at all of the camps varied by whom, when and how they were constructed. Hospitals also varied from camp to camp. Though every camp had at least one hospital, there was no set plan of what the hospital should be designed to look like as the individual contractors hired to construct the building used their own construction drawings when the contract was completed. This idea can be found in almost all of the buildings found throughout these five camps. Construction documents were created and shown to the commanding officer of the camp before possibly being set to Col. Hoffman, though this was not always the case, and the construction project was then underway upon receiving approval by Col. Hoffman. In at least one occasion, Col. Hoffman only wanted to know the price of the construction before approving the project. This idea only helps prove that there was no greater design plan for the prison camps throughout the Midwest or eastern prison camps. Another similarity between the camps is the wooden

stockade fence. Even the fence varies depending on the camp. At Camp Butler and Camp Morton the fence height was twelve feet high while the fence at Camp Douglas was fourteen feet high.

Even with the similarities found in the camps, there were also a lot of differences between them and differences between structures that were similar. The two camps with the biggest differences are Camp Douglas and the Rock Island Barracks. For the most part, Camp Morton, Camp Butler and Alton Military Prison consisted of the usual barracks, hospitals, and administration buildings, though all of them were arranged in different organizational patterns or locations within the camps. Nonetheless, Camp Douglas had a large sewer system that would allow the barracks to be arranged in rows along the sewer/water line which was created by using large pumps to pump water from Lake Michigan to the camp. Rock Island would have a similar sewer/water line system. The difference between the two was that Rock Island created a large reservoir to hold back the water and would supply enough pressure to clean out the sinks and still provide enough pressure to supply the hydrants found throughout the camp. The only problem with these two systems is that they were applied really late in the war.

There seems to be no centralized plan in the case studies previously discussed that would lead one to believe that there was a greater plan created for the operation of the prisoner- of-war camps through the north at that time. These haphazard designs were only a hindrance to the effectiveness of the camps as so many prisoners were concentrated in so few acres. Because the camps were so overcrowded, the men were

left going without, as in the case of Camp Douglas, sinks or bathroom facilities. The prisoners of the camps were also displeased by the conditions of the camps, which caused the prisoners to erupt into violence against the camp. As demonstrated throughout this paper, the architectural destruction was not only a result of poor planning and construction, but also the behavior of the inmates and only added to the already poor conditions they had been dealt. Yet, it was not only the prisoners causing destruction, but it was also the paroled Union soldiers who felt unfairly treated by their own country.

Nevertheless, the materials used in the construction of the camps also caused problems for both the camp and the prisoners. As previously stated, the construction was hurried, and as a result materials were gathered as quickly as possible. In most cases this meant that these camps were constructed using green wood. This is wood that has not been dried thoroughly, thus it has high moisture content. When the weather began to warm and the moisture began to evaporate, the wood would shrink causing large gaps between the once fitted joints. These gaps allowed the weather, bugs, and even rodents to enter the barracks. In almost all instances, the barracks had no sort of insulation in a climate which is very cold for much of the year. Again, one can draw the conclusion that the architecture and the overall lack of a centralized plan led to the demise of the camps, as the materials were already breaking down when the sun warmed the buildings. Had a centralized plan been created for the entire prison system,

designs and construction techniques could have been focused on more thorough analysis of the camp and building locations and building construction.

Throughout the paper, the theme of evolving camps has come up. This is because of the materials breaking down and causing need for repairs. Although there were some high ranking officials, in particularly Col. Hoffman, within the Union army who did not care about the conditions of the camp, generally most officials tried to make the environment tolerable for the prisoners. It is stated by Frances Casstevens that “the prisoners suffered because of ignorance, as a result of government bureaucracy and poorly thought-out rules and regulations, or deliberate cutbacks in rations.”²⁹³ The higher into bureaucracy the prison system went the more negligent the prison system became. It was the commanding officers and A.M. Clark, the Surgeon and Acting Medical Inspector of Prisoners of War, that really tried to make the worst situation into something tolerable, as in the case of Rock Island, when the construction of a reservoir was needed. Rather than turning to outside contractors, who would have caused the camp to spend large amounts money, camp officials looked within. This idea greatly satisfied Col. Hoffmann as he is stated as being a “methodical, budget minded administrator who pinched every penny”²⁹⁴ by Casstevens. By giving the prisoners a chance to work for a few coins, not only were the officials helping prisoners morale by making them feel needed, but also they were improving the conditions for all who were imprisoned there by allowing them to use their pay through the sutler store. The

²⁹³ Casstevens, 4.

²⁹⁴ Casstevens, 6.

officials made repairs as often as was possible, in an attempt to keep these men in a humane manner. The officials that tried to repair and maintain the camp also played a role in the architectural development. Therefore it is inappropriate to say that the conditions of the camp and the cheaply built barracks were caused by the camp commanders. It was those men that risked their stature in the military and as commanding officer at the camp to provide a site that was not as bad as it could have been. The commanding officers' attempts changed the appearance of their camps thus reflecting a concerned attitude toward the enclosure even if it was not according to a greater design plan in most cases.

When considering the development of these camps, one must always consider the motive behind their development. The theme of the prison construction was a quick, temporary enclosure used to house soldiers until they could be exchanged. Col. Hoffman planned for cheaply constructed buildings because the buildings would not be built to remain on the landscape. These camps were also never intended to house thousands for years on end, thus materials they were constructed with were not chosen to endure. Army administration during the Civil War was not constructing these enclosures as cruel and inhumane punishment for their enemies because many of the original buildings held Union volunteers. These camps were simple prisons that, because of the continual maintenance, architectural evolution, and in some cases planning over time (Camp Douglas) were able to operate for years, far beyond any anticipated length.

The officials were doing the best they could with the materials, money, and lack of planning oversight.

Sadly, these prisons all share the same poignant fate. That is each has all but disappeared from the landscape of the Midwest. As the United States has grown and expanded, the ground that once held these prisons has been reclaimed for many different uses. Some land has become parks, while others have been returned to farm ground. With only a tiny corner standing, Alton prison is the only prison with any part of the structure even left in a small corner of a parking lot. This can be seen through the difference in materials used in the Alton site (stone) compared to the wooden buildings of the other four prisons. Without this paper and the research accompanying it, these prisons structurally would be all but forgotten forever, along with all the lessons that they can provide us.

Therefore, it can be determined that there were similarities in the facilities of these camps, through the use of the materials like wood and the construction of administration buildings. In most cases, the camps developed haphazardly and began to expand in all directions with no sense of how it would relate back to the prisoners and how their lay out would affect how the camp operated. In all but one case (Rock Island), the camps were constructed in a decentralized manner, with no oversight from the federal government in how the camp was arranged or operated. Even that one centralized plan had its faults leaving out key structures used in the operation of the camp. Therefore, in analyzing these five case studies, one is able to determine that no

centralized plan was ever adopted for the organization of these camps or one that would encompass all other prison camps throughout the Union. One is also able to see that the prisoners played a large role in the built environment in which they lived which is often an oversight in many texts. They not only affected the camps in a negative manner, but in some instances were able to better the environment by working on the facilities in the camp which is an area that is not talked about in most of the literature on these prison camps as well as their lack of their overall planning from the outset of the commission as prisoner-of-war camps.

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